

**Alaska Statewide Independent Living Council, Inc.  
Quarterly Meeting**

**LOCATION**

Videoconference

**DATE**

February 10 - 12, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo  
Peninsula Reporting

*Wednesday, February 10, 2021*

**Council Members Present:**

Ric Nelson, Chair  
Tristan KnutsonLombardo  
Nona Safra  
Irma Goodwine  
Doug Toelle  
Jessica Chapman  
Jim Kreatschman  
Anthony Newman

**Council Members Absent:**

Doreen Leavitt  
Emilie Woodward  
Wendi Shanks

**Guests:**

Michael Walsh  
Steve Ragland  
Brian Landrum  
Lucy Cordwell  
David Newman  
Marianne Mills  
Patrick Reinhart  
Beverly Schoonover  
Eric Gurley  
Joyanna Geisler  
Joan O'Keefe  
Denice Gilroy

**Staff:**

Michael Christian, Executive Director  
Kathy Munk, Administrative Assistant

**Court Reporter:**

Lenny DiPaolo, RPR, CRR, CCP

**CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.**

**ROLL CALL – Quorum Established**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Doug Toelle **MOVED** to approve the consent agenda, **SECONDED** by Tristan Knutson-Lombardo. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**, and the consent agenda was approved as presented.

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

Michael Christian opened up an opportunity for members of the SILC to introduce themselves. Anthony Newman introduced himself as the department representative to the SILC.

## **SILC DUTIES, AUTHORITIES, AND LIMITATIONS**

Michael Christian referred members of the SILC to the handout from the ILRU RapidCourse regarding SILC statutory duties. He noted that there five duties, three authorities, and one limitation and reviewed them as follows:

### Duties:

- A. Develop (in conjunction with the CIL directors) the State Plan required in Section 704.
  - Will be in the process of developing the next SPIL starting in September of 2022.
  - Will conduct public forums to gather stakeholder feedback.
- B. Monitor, review, and evaluate the implementation of the State Plan.
  - Progress will be reported to the Council around October of each year.
- C. Meet regularly and ensure that such meetings of the Council are open to the public and sufficient advanced notice of such meetings is provided.
  - Meetings are held quarterly, and notice is given to the public.
- D. Submit to the administrator such periodic reports as the administrator may reasonably request, and keep such records, and afford such access to such records, as the administrator finds necessary to verify such reports.
  - Program Performance Report (PPR) is submitted December 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.
- E. As appropriate, coordinate activities with other entities in the state that provide services similar to or complementary to independent living services, such as entities that facilitate the provision of or provide long-term community-based services and supports.
  - Coordinate with other partners such as Disability Law Center of Alaska and UAA Center for Human Development.

Authorities: (May elect to do, but aren't required to do)

- A. In order to improve services provided to individuals with disabilities, work with Centers for Independent Living to coordinate services with public and private entities.
- Home Accessibility/Enabling Technology pilot
  - ATLA
  - Rural Ramp Project
  - SILC is not providing direct services but is serving as a fiduciary agent working with Centers to coordinate those services.
- B. Conduct resource development activities to support the activities described as functions, or to support the provision of independent living services by Centers for Independent Living.
- SPIL statement is very broad in terms of the resource development the SILC will take part in. Goal 9 is the sustainability goal that ties into resource development to make the SILC a more sustainable non-profit. The SILC has committed to developing a fund development plan.
- C. Perform such other functions, consistent with the purpose of this chapter and comparable to other functions described in this subsection, as the Council determines to be appropriate.
- Systems advocacy
  - Youth Leadership Forum

Limitations:

There is also one limitation on SILCs, and that is that they shall not provide independent living services directly to individuals with significant disabilities or manage such services.

- SILC refers the public to Centers and other partners for specific information.

**BYLAWS REVIEW**

Michael Walsh from Foraker Group stated that he reviewed the SILC's bylaws as requested by Michael Christian, particularly to ensure the bylaws reflect the SILC's practices. He also noted that some of the things in the current bylaws lean more toward policies rather than bylaws. He shared the following thoughts to consider:

Article 2 – Duties and Responsibilities

- Are all these activities happening?

- Is it necessary to put this big list of responsibilities in this document? Generally such a proscriptive or in-depth listing of roles and responsibilities wouldn't be included in bylaws. If it were instead created in policy, it would be easier to change.

### Membership

- “Strive” to have representation from all geographic areas is accurate if it's an issue the Council struggles with because if they can't achieve it, they are not in violation of their bylaws.
- If the SILC has had a membership discussion regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion, this would be a good place to incorporate that information.
- Per diem and travel expenses could live in policy rather than bylaws.
- Suggestion to start the description with the composition of voting members.
- Removal of board members could be an item of its own.
- Remove language that is gender specific.
- Section 8 involving board members will be active in SILC operations should be changed to “Members will be active in SILC governance.”

### Article 5 – Officer's Duties and Executive Committee

- Recommended to not have an Executive Committee if most of the governance responsibilities fall to the full board.
- C, Orientation for officers is typically in policy and not the bylaws.
- Tighten up the language regarding the staggered terms for officers. It's mentioned in a couple different places.
- Duties of officers – too much information, should be more concise, less prescriptive.

Michael Walsh will send his written recommendations to Michael Christian.

## **INNOVATIVE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT FROM CHARLES LEA CENTER**

Steve Ragland, vice president of special projects for Charles Lea Center, provided a report to the SILC about the history of the Charles Lea Center and its business relationship with other ventures created with the ultimate goal to hire people with disabilities at a competitive wage. He stated that Charles Lea Center is a 501(c)(3) that provides the services of residential, employment, case management, and behavior through state and federal programs. Their total budget is about \$40M per year, and they have over 500 employees. Underneath that they have the Charles

Lea Industrial Corporation that does contracts with outside businesses focused on employment opportunities. They also have eight different corporations set up for encompassing their HUD properties. Another organization is called the CLC Administrative Services, and it is a completely separate affiliate of Charles Lea Center. Any for-profit ventures are handled through the CLC Administrative Services, and he discussed the franchise model opportunities under this umbrella.

Steve Ragland stated that they decided to start a hydroponic greenhouse as a pilot project over the last couple of years, and he reviewed photos with members of the SILC to demonstrate the facilities. He stated that once they prove their project and determine if this is sustainable and they have a market for the produce, they will go for funding to expand it.

### **SILC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Michael Christian stated that he has been thinking about how to form a for-profit arm of the SILC that could be used to generate discretionary funds. He stated that he has experience in the area of commercial aquaponic food production and knows how to design his own aquaponic deep water culture system using materials he can get locally or online. He was thinking about starting something small, if the board is so inclined, to explore as a possibility for resource development. He stated that he can build modular greenhouses so they would be an asset of the SILC. His vision is that ultimately those who are trained within that greenhouse would very easily be able to go on and start their own business. In addition, an operation can be designed around the abilities of the individual.

Nona Safra added that high-tunnel greenhouses were built at the Anchor Point Senior Center, and this is their third growing season. She has access to all of that information if the SILC decides to go in this direction, and she knows where to get things that are appropriate for Alaska's environment. The Anchor Point project has been successful feeding seniors in the area.

Michael Christian stated that if the SILC wants to pursue this, he will need to get a public benefit waiver because the project would be considered a conflict of interest for him. He has discussed this with Maria Bahr from the Office of the Attorney General, and she felt it shouldn't be an issue because it is providing public benefit to people with disabilities. He noted that another consideration is property on which to operate, and he had a lead on a possible location that he needs to follow up on. He believes it makes the most sense to start out small, find success on a

smaller scale, and then evaluate whether or not it would be something they would want to expand on.

Nona Safra further added that they could look to the Kenai Peninsula Borough to see if there is land available for lease. Mayor Charlie Pierce is supportive of independent living, and she can't imagine the Borough Assembly wouldn't be supportive of increasing employment opportunities. She stated that she will talk to Mayor Pierce.

Ric Nelson asked if they would need to start a for-profit arm of the SILC before they get this going. Michael Christian stated that Steve Ragland has provided him some information, but Michael was thinking they could incubate the business and then move it into an LLC that was under a benefit corporation similar to what the Charles Lea Center has done. Based on a question from Doug Toelle, Michael noted that he can definitely put a business plan together for this that he will present to the SILC.

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo **MOVED** that Michael Christian continue investigating a new hydroponic business as a source of income for the SILC and report back to the board about it, **SECONDED** by Nona Safra.

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo added during discussion that he would like to see a business plan with numbers and justification, because it is a pretty big leap for the SILC, even though Michael Christian has experience with this. Tristan is supportive of the concept, but believes they as members need to make sure they are doing their due diligence to make sure this is a sound investment.

Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH NORTHWEST ADA CENTER**

Michael Christian stated that he was approached by the Northwest ADA Center about improving their presence in Alaska. They believe they can provide the SILC with at least \$35,000 in funding to have people trained in the ADA so that they can then go on to provide ADA training in the unserved and underserved areas of Alaska. The person that used to work in Alaska with the Northwest ADA Center has since moved out of state. In the past it seemed like the focus was more on the Anchorage area and other more populated areas of the state, but the Northwest ADA Center would really like to get out there with more of a statewide presence. This would be something that would likely pull in the Outreach and

Communication Committee, possibly the Advocacy Committee, and perhaps the Development Committee to get this off the ground. This might also be something where the SILC would want to incorporate it into their fund development plan to see if it's something they can keep moving into the future.

Michael noted that the Northwest ADA Center is also open to suggestions from the SILC. He believes the SILC might need another staff member to pull this off effectively, and that's something he would like to talk to the Northwest ADA Center about.

Tristan Knutson-Lombardo stated that he believes this is a great fit for the SILC. Doug Toelle added that the ADA Center is a non-partisan group that works with both people and businesses and doesn't take sides. They were always really good to work with. Michael Christian added that this could also be something that would increase the SILC's presence and visibility in the state.

### **SILC WEBSITE**

Michael Christian asked for approval from the board on funding an overhaul of the website by a contractor, and he asked how they felt about appropriating the funding that would have been used for the face-to-face meeting in April that will now be held virtually. Ric Nelson noted that a website rebuild would cost between \$4,000 and \$6,000, and there will also be a fee to maintain it.

Anthony Newman stated that he investigated what it would be for the SILC to piggyback on the State's website. He felt that the bottom line was given that the SILC is an independent organization, there may be more cons than pros for the SILC to go with that option. He noted that a pro would be that the DHSS Public Information Team would manage the updates, and there might be some good connections for publicity and marketing there. The cons are that it would require the SILC to be locked into the State of Alaska website design, feel, and look, and it would also be locked into whatever technology the State has, which may not always keep pace with what is best. He is also unsure if the SILC would be able to receive donations through a State-sponsored site.

Nona Safra **MOVED** that Michael Christian move forward with a website if they can do it under the current budget, **SECONDED** by Doug Toelle. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.



## SILC REPRESENTATIVE ON SVRC

Michael Christian reported that Jaye Palmer was not reappointed to the SILC, and she was previously serving as the SILC's representative to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC). Ric Nelson explained the structure of the SVRC and noted that he has served on the SVRC for three years and was recently reappointed for another three-year term. If no other members of the SILC are interested, Ric Nelson volunteered to serve in this position. Michael noted that he has already discussed this with Boards and Commissions and Jason Caputo with the SVRC, and there would be no issue with Ric holding this seat.

Doug Toelle **MOVED** that Ric Nelson be the SILC representative on the SVRC, **SECONDED** by Irma Goodwine. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**.

## PREPARATION FOR LEGISLATIVE VISITS

Michael Christian noted that the majority of the legislative visits will take place after this week due to a conflict with AgeNet legislative visits. He discussed that he and the Centers will be working to get consumers set up to participate in legislative visits by region. Michael noted that he will be creating some materials on home and community-based services and talking points to go along with that.

Michael Christian then referred SILC members to the independent living infographic, which is a graphic that many legislators are familiar with and is in a similar format to what the SILC has used in the past. The infographic is a visual document that shows the impact of the low-cost level of care that Centers for Independent Living (CILs) provide in the state at the low end of the continuum of care. He encouraged SILC members to carefully review and become familiar with the contents of the infographic. He noted that of particular note is the roughly \$12.5M they were able to save the State through transition and diversion.

Michael Christian noted that one change with the infographic this year is that they are now showing the unserved regions of the state in addition to the served and underserved. Tristan Knutson-Lombardo added that there is a large chunk of the map in gray which depicts that independent living services aren't being delivered there by a CIL. The other areas that are color coded are specific to each of the four CILs meaning that they have a physical presence in one of those communities, and they do rural outreach to those places they do not have a physical presence. There is a need for additional funding for CILs if they are going to work to cover those unserved areas given the geography of the state. Michael Christian noted that

increased funding is unlikely in this current budget environment, but it will be an opportunity to educate legislators from those unserved areas about the opportunity for the State to save more money by expanding IL services into those areas.

Michael Christian stated that the SILC has secured technical assistance funds through the Trust to hire a consultant to work with the IL Network to develop a high-performance measurement framework which will allow them to demonstrate the impact of the independent living program even better than they are now. He is hoping that will enable them to show even more cost savings beyond those that are associated with diversion and transition from nursing homes. That work will also play into the funding formula that is used to distribute federal and state funds to the Centers.

Council members discussed topics to engage in with legislators, primarily focusing on how independent living services have the greatest reach to Alaskans at the lowest cost of care in their home community. Tristan Knutson-Lombardo verbally demonstrated how to organize the short 15-minute window they have visiting with legislators.

### **PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

A public testimony period was offered. No members of the public appeared.

### **RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 1:00 p.m.

***Thursday, February 11, 2021***

**CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.**

### **ABIN UPDATE**

Brian Landrum presented to the SILC on the Alaska Brain Injury Network (ABIN) as follows:

#### ***Mission:***

The Alaska Brain Injury Network (ABIN) mission is to educate, plan, coordinate, and advocate for a comprehensive service delivery system for TBI survivors and their families. Our vision encompasses working to prevent traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and promote wellness for Alaskans with brain injuries.

### **Brain Injury in Alaska:**

Each year 701 people are hospitalized for TBI in Alaska, according to the Alaska State Trauma Registry Hospitalization Data compiled by the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC). This information was created to provide all Alaskans with the incidence rates of brain injuries in their region as well as how work can be done to prevent them.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition of the Alaska Native Injury Atlas was published in March 2020. Also compiled by ANTHC, this full report includes comparisons of AI/AN populations with the non-Native population plus national population data.

### **Statistics:**

- Alaska has one of the highest rates of TBI in the nation.
- There are an estimated 11,900 Alaskans living with disability due to brain injury.
- Each year 800 Alaskans are hospitalized with TBI, which is more than new diagnoses for breast and lung cancer combined.
- 150 Alaskans die due to brain injury each year.
- An estimated 38 percent of hospitalizations from brain injury result in permanent disability.
- An estimated 247 Alaskans become permanently disabled due to traumatic brain injury each year.
- Alaska is among a small number of states that lack a TBI rehabilitation program.
- More than 3.17 million Americans live with a disability as a result of a TBI.

### **Causes of TBI in Alaska 2012 – 2016:**

- Fall
- Motor vehicle
- Assault
- All-terrain vehicle
- Snowmachine
- Struck by or against
- Suicide attempt
- Pedal cycle
- Other

### **Programs:**

ABIN is the statewide leader in brain injury advocacy, information, support, and trainings.

*Brain Injury Support Group:*

The Brain Recovery Action Group (BRAG) is a peer-led group whose primary goal is to provide support, understanding and hope to those living with a brain injury. The group is open to anyone who is living with a traumatic or acquired brain injury. It is a great way to connect with others who truly understand the impact a brain injury has on all aspects of one's life. They meet twice a month.

Currently, the group is in a reorganization process after having to return to Zoom sessions. During the pandemic, they have partnered with Access Alaska to continue support groups.

*TABI Mini-Grant Program:*

The TABI grant is a mini-grant program administered by the State of Alaska, Division of Senior and Disability Services (SDS) and managed by the Alaska Brain Injury Network. The grant is used to meet the needs of those who have sustained a traumatic or acquired brain injury who are experiencing financial hardship. The needs covered under the grant include medical, dental, housing, transportation, adaptive needs, and then anything other after that. This is a grant of last resort after all other funding efforts have been exhausted, and the grants are awarded by a committee monthly. Money is given to the vendor or service provider, not the brain injury survivor directly. The maximum is \$2,500 per fiscal year and \$5,000 over the course of five years for an individual.

*Annual Brain Institute:*

This activity is jointly provided by ABIN in collaboration with several professional development/continuing education agencies. ABIN and the AK Training Cooperative are pleased to host this outstanding educational opportunity. They have an impressive lineup of both national and local experts in the field of brain injury. Due to COVID, this event will not be held in person, but they are working on a series of online educational opportunities. Scholarships are offered for survivors, family members, students, and members of the military.

*Rural Outreach Clinics:*

In cooperation with rural communities in Alaska, ABIN travels to small communities to promote brain injury awareness, assist with the assessment of a potential injury, and bring tools that allow medical providers and community leaders to be able to assist in future brain injury events. Because of COVID, the

rural outreach trips to Bethel and the Mat-Su were postponed, and because of HIPAA constraints and rural internet issues, they were unable to do a Zoom version.

### **Challenges and Opportunities:**

- Funding: With dwindling state funding, ABIN has found it necessary to partner with other agencies for joint grants, co-location opportunities, elimination of redundancies, and receive corporate and individual giving.
- Outreach: Increase outreach to rural areas with “Clinic in a box,” a curriculum designed around in-person outreach clinics to be distributed to villages around the state.
- Resource expansion: Increase availability of information to assist families and survivors in their next step utilizing online and mobile applications along with traditional phone system.
- Advocacy and Awareness: Create a regional and statewide campaign to promote brain injury awareness through traditional and social media outlets. March is Brain Injury Awareness Month, and ABIN has reached out to Alaska Public Media to work on stories to share to create more awareness.

Anthony Newman asked if Brian Landrum was aware of HB 20, which asks that the State fund a targeted case management program for traumatic and acquired brain injury. Brian Landrum stated that he is definitely aware, and there has been quite a bit of discussion at their TABI Council meetings and offline as well.

### **TABI ADVISORY COUNCIL UPDATE**

Lucy Cordwell presented on the Traumatic and Acquired Brain Injury (TABI) Advisory Council as follows:

#### **Mission:**

To understand, educate, and advocate for the needs of all Alaskans regarding traumatic and acquired brain injury.

#### **TABI Advisory Council:**

##### **Two new members:**

1. Individual with brain injury
2. Family member of individual with brain injury

##### **Total:**

- 31 members
  - 42 percent are persons with brain injury or family members
- 21 voting members
  - 52 percent are persons with a brain injury.

**State Plan for Brain Injury:**

State Plan created by the TABI Advisory Council using data from:

- Brain Injury Needs Assessment Survey
- Alaska Trauma Registry
- Alaska Health Facilities Data Reporting Program (HFDR)
- AK AIMS study on who accesses Behavioral Health Services
- TABI Legal Needs Assessment (focus groups and survey)

Held public comment and included the findings:

- Four live sessions
- Survey
- E-mail and phone comment options available.

State Plan finalized in August of 2020.

**State Plan for Brain Injury Overview:**

Priority areas:

- Prevention
- Awareness
- Resources
- Data
- Infrastructure

**Subcommittee Work:**

**Prevention**

- Current representation on ACoA, ABADA/AMHB, GCDSE, ASVIP
  - Reaching out to more to build connections.

**Awareness**

- ECHO trainings:
  - Brain injury for individuals and family members – ended December, 2020
  - Head injury for providers – eight sessions February to May, 2021.

- Reducing Recidivism and Reentry Conference panel
- Advised documentary filmmakers on brain injury.

### **Resources**

- Started work on a brain injury support guide.

### **Data**

- Completed review of registries from other states
- Health Facilities Data Reporting (HFDR) 2017 and 2018 analyzed.

### **Infrastructure**

- TABI Advisory Council staff position written into AMHTA FY22/23 budget
- Making public comment for 1915(c) waiver.

### **Preparation to Implement the State Plan:**

#### **Recent TABI Advisory Council speakers and trainings:**

- **Waivers:**
  - Behavioral Health spoke on the 1115 waiver, which is about the services needed, so it includes individuals with brain injury.
  - Rebecca Quinn from North Dakota who successfully started a brain injury waiver there.
- **Peer mentoring**
  - Seija Curtin from the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado explained options and how they implemented their program.
- **Advocacy**
  - Teri Tibbett, full-day training attended by Council members.

Lucy Cordwell stated that the TABI Advisory Council meets the second Friday of each month from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. People are encouraged to join a subcommittee to help work to achieve a State Plan goal.

### **ADA TRAINING**

David Newman, the state ADA coordinator, stated that his office helps ensure that individuals with disabilities have equal access to the State's facilities, programs and services under Title II of the ADA. In addition to that, he is the access and functional needs liaison for the State Emergency Operation Center. He explained

the history that led up to the ADA in 1990 and reviewed his PowerPoint presentation as follows:

**What is the ADA?**

42 USC 12101 - Federal civil rights legislation that says it is illegal to discriminate against people with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, telecommunications, and transportation.

**What is the Definition of Disability under the ADA?**

An individual with a disability is defined in the act as someone who has "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is regarded as having such an impairment."

**Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA) of 2008**

- Overall purpose – “To restore the intent and protections of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.”
- The Act emphasizes that the definition of disability should be construed in favor of broad coverage of individuals to the maximum extent permitted by the terms of the ADA and generally shall not require extensive analysis.
- Effective January 1, 2009; Regulations effective May 24, 2011.

The ADA has a unique appeal for all Americans because, unlike other civil rights categories such as race and gender, an individual may become a member of the protected class at any moment in his or her life.

**List of medical conditions considered a disability under the ADA:  
(not a complete list)**

- Deafness
- Blindness
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Epilepsy
- Intellectual disabilities
- Partial or completely missing limbs
- Mobility impairments requiring the use of a wheelchair
- Autism
- Cerebral palsy
- HIV infection
- Multiple sclerosis



- Muscular dystrophy
- Major depressive disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Schizophrenia

**Examples of conditions not included in the ADA:**

- Compulsive gambling
- Kleptomania
- Pyromania
- Sexual behavioral disorders
- Physical characteristics such as eye color, hair color, left-handed
- Common personality traits
- Psychoactive substance abuse disorders resulting from the current illegal use of drugs.

**Titles of the ADA**

- Title I – Employment – 29 CFR 1630
- Title II – State and Local Government – 28 CFR 35
- Title III – Public Accommodations – 28 CFR 36
- Title IV – Telecommunications
- Title V – Miscellaneous Provisions – There are separate regulations under the Code of Federal Regulations that have to do with transportation services – 49 CFR 37.

**Age: In 2018, the prevalence of disability in Alaska was:**

- 11.8 percent for persons of all ages
- 0.2 percent for persons ages 4 and under
- 4.0 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
- 4.8 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
- 10.8 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
- 32.3 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
- 49.9 percent for persons ages 75+

**Disability Type: In 2018, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in Alaska was:**

- 2.7% reported a visual disability
- 4.2% reported a hearing disability

- 4.9% reported an ambulatory disability
- 4.7% reported a cognitive disability
- 1.7% reported a self-care disability
- 4.4% reported an independent living disability.

### **State ADA Compliance Program**

- Established under Administrative Order 129 by Governor Hickel in 1992.
- Updated by Administrative Order 262 by Governor Parnell in 2012.
- Sets policy for executive branch agencies to ensure nondiscrimination against individuals with disabilities in State facilities, programs, and services.
- Establishes policies, guidelines, and procedures for State agencies to follow to ensure compliance.
- Creates and outlines roles and responsibilities for Department ADA coordinators.
- Provides training and technical assistance.

### **Policy on Nondiscriminatory Treatment - 6 AAC 65.010(a)**

- A qualified individual with a disability may not be excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a State agency, or be subject to discrimination by a State agency, because of that disability;
- An agency may not discriminate against a qualified individual with a disability because of that individual's disability with regard to job application procedures; the hiring, advancement, or discharge of employees; employee compensation; job training; or any other term, condition, or privilege of employment;
- An agency shall operate each of its services, programs, and activities so that each service, program, or activity, when viewed in its entirety, is readily accessible to and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities.

### **State Commission for Human Rights - AS 18.80.255(3)**

It is unlawful for the State or any of its political subdivisions to refuse or deny to a person any local, state, or federal funds, services, goods, facilities, advantages, or privileges because of physical or mental disability.

### **Effective Communication**

- The ADA requires that Title II entities (State and local governments) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities.

- Covered entities must provide auxiliary aids and services when needed to communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

### **Examples of Auxiliary Aids and Services:**

- Interpreters
- Notetakers
- Screen readers
- Computer Aided Real-Time Transcription (CART)
- Written materials
- Telephone handset amplifiers
- Assistive listening devices
- Hearing aid compatible telephones
- Text telephones
- Open or closed captioning
- Video interpreting services
- E-mail
- Text messaging
- Qualified readers
- Taped texts
- Audio recordings
- Braille materials
- Large print materials
- Material in electronic formats

### **2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design**

- Starting March 15, 2012, all covered entities must follow the 2010 ADA Standards.
- Sets minimum requirements – both scoping and technical – for newly designed and constructed or altered State and local government facilities, public accommodations, and commercial facilities to be readily accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities.
- 1991 standards apply to work commenced before March 15, 2012.

### **Service Animals**

- Service animals are dogs or miniature horses that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities. The work or task a service animal has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability.
- Animals whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals.
- There are different specific requirements for the Air Carrier's Act and the Fair Housing Act.
- Alaska State Commission for Human Rights has a regulation for exceptions for any type of alert animal - 6 AAC 30.610.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

- 2018 earthquake
- Fires of 2019
- COVID-19 in 2020

### **Web Accessibility**

- The State of Alaska takes proactive steps to ensure people with disabilities can readily access and use information and communication technology.
- Individuals may request reasonable accommodation or materials in alternate formats directly from the state program or request help from a department ADA coordinator.
- What has been done:
  - Accessibility notices on all the pages of all State websites
  - Working with Microsoft proof of concept tool to scan and make accessible all State PDFs.

### **Voting**

Title II of the ADA requires state and local governments to ensure that people with disabilities have a full and equal opportunity to vote. The ADA's provisions apply to all aspects of voting, including voter registration, site selection, and the casting of ballots, whether on Election Day or during an early voting process.

### **Self-Evaluation**

- Identifies barriers in policies, practices, facilities, and communications with respect to current/new requirements.
- Reviews progress from previous year.
- Captures data on complaints, issues, and best practices.
- Brings awareness to ADA requirements.
- Facilitates ADA coordinator planning.
- Aids in setting statewide priorities and use of resources.

### **Transition Plan**

Structural modifications to achieve program accessibility

1. List of physical barriers.
2. Detailed outline to remove these barriers.
3. Schedule for taking the necessary steps, identifying interim steps during each year.
4. Official responsible for implementation.

## DVR UPDATE

Jim Kreatschman provided some history about Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) by stating that in 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which required that DVR had to set aside 15 percent of the budget to deliver Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. Pre-ETS is job exploration, work readiness training, counseling on post-secondary education, work-based learning, work experience, and self advocacy to any student statewide with a disability who needs it in coordination with school districts. In 2019 they served over 900 kids with Pre-ETS utilizing CILs and other organizations, and in conjunction with school districts. Because of COVID, their numbers dropped to serving 612 students in 2020. They were able to continue their summer work program with over 100 students.

Jim Kreatschman stated that in November they introduced the platform TransitionAlaska.org, which contains pre-recorded content on transition, resources, and information for students, parents, and teachers. In conjunction with that release, they did a virtual transition training for teachers, and they had 198 teachers register with 100 participating. The silver lining to doing all this virtually is Jim now has direct access to reach out to special education teachers to provide them with information. He stated that they were able to pick up three new schools for JOBZ Clubs and two schools for S'Cool Store. One problem is, though, that if kids aren't in school, these programs can't be implemented.

Jim noted that because of the uncertainty of the pandemic, teachers weren't planning ahead because they didn't know what the future looked like, and unfortunately the launch of the website only resulted in the registration of four students. They have retooled and next week will host a Connection Matters webinar about building resilient kids. In surveying the teachers, they noted that depression and anxiety is rampant through school, and kids that have a lot of anxiety can't do future planning. DVR brought in a company called Brightways Learning to do a train-the-trainer session with teachers on how they can teach resiliency to their students, and then they will have asynchronous training. The lesson plans will be on the website so that teachers can then go back and virtually teach students how to be more resilient, how to set goals, and how to identify their network of support.

Jim Kreatschman stated that he wanted to develop a transition product that teachers in rural Alaska can use. He approached the Trust, and the Trust funded Rain van den Berg to work with a group of rural teachers and TVR directors to put together

a book for both urban and rural youth. It's a paper and pencil version so that teachers can send it home to students in rural Alaska. It also has the accompanying teacher's resource guide that relies heavily on the Governor's Council Empowerment Through Employment Resource Guide.

Jim Kreatschman stated that they have been doing three-to-five-day transition camps, but those shut down because schools were closed to in-person learning. They have now switched to doing those transition camps virtually. Any school district can contract, and DVR and DEED pays all the costs. They have already held one with Tanana, and Fairbanks Youth Facility, Bethel Youth Facility, and Bering Strait School District are coming up. They will do their first Alaska virtual statewide transition camp in May.

Jim stated that the summer work program is still on for this summer, and they have 12 returning programs. DVR has sent out invitations for new programs to join, and those proposals are due March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **AGENET UPDATE**

Marianne Mills presented to the SILC as follows:

AgeNet is the statewide leadership association for Alaska senior service providers and has been an advocate for Alaskans 60 and older for more than 20 years. The goal of AgeNet is working to assure the appropriate network of senior services is available in every Alaskan community for all seniors so they might live independently with honor and dignity. She noted that AgeNet strives to reach every single community and area in Alaska.

Marianne Mills shared the documentation AgeNet will be sharing with legislators during their upcoming legislative visits:

#### **Some Facts About Alaska's Senior Citizens:**

- Alaska has the fastest growing senior population of the 50 states.
- Alaskans over the age of 85 comprise the fastest growing age group.
- Retired seniors as a whole contribute approximately \$2.5B annually to Alaska's economy, including their retirement income and healthcare spending.

- Seniors' contribution to Alaska's economy is one of the state's top industries; seniors spend locally, year-round, and their spending multiplies throughout the economy.
- Alaska's seniors prefer to stay in their own homes and communities, and it is in the interest of the State for seniors to stay in Alaska.

**AgeNet Priorities for 2021:**

1. Protect funding for senior home and community-based services which prevent or delay costly institutional care. Examples of home and community-based services include senior grants and Alaskans Living Independently Waiver.
2. Further develop services for those affected by Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. More than 12,500 Alaskans are living with Alzheimer's or other dementia, and by 2030, that number is expected to increase by 90 percent. AgeNet supports meeting their needs with the greater flexibility and availability of services offered under the Medicaid 1915(k) option, which is also known as Community First Choice. They also support emerging residential alternatives as well as education to Alaskans about the benefits of early diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia.
3. Support funding for transportation. Support the Human Services Grant Program through the Department of Transportation, which offers funding for replacement vans and operating assistance for local providers. The Governor has included \$1M in general funds and \$300,000 in MHTAAR funding for this program. They also advocate for the Alaska Marine Highway for elders to receive medical care and for service providers and senior centers to receive food for their meal programs. Villages also rely on the ferry system to get their vehicles to hub communities for repairs.

Marianne Mills highlighted the continuum of care for older Alaskans, the State of Alaska continuum of care spreadsheet, and a position paper that home and community-based services for older Alaskans saves money. She noted that last year the State served over 33,000 people at a cost of only \$509 average per person through the grant program.

Anthony Newman asked Marianne Mills how she felt the messaging around COVID and vaccinations has gone and how the State has done in getting the word out to seniors about the availability of vaccines and vaccine clinics. She believes DHSS has done a great job of getting the word out. She noted that there have even been some vaccine clinics at senior centers around the state. Colleagues in the Mat-Su have remarked that they will be opening up their senior centers for

congregate meals because they are confident the seniors have gotten the opportunity to be protected through vaccinations.

## **ALASKA MOBILITY COALITION (AMC) UPDATE**

Patrick Reinhart introduced himself as the part-time executive director of AMC. He provided some historical perspective as the first SILC director for 14 years. In 2002, he and Millie Ryan from the Governor's Council were in Washington, D.C. doing advocacy work on behalf of their councils, and one of the things they proposed to the Congressional delegation was the idea of a coalition of disability and senior entities that provide transportation for people. As a result, Senator Ted Stevens put \$600,000 a year into the appropriation bills for the Alaska Mobility Coalition, which was a jointly sponsored effort by the Governor's Council and the SILC. All the community transportation providers got behind it as did the professional transit organization.

Patrick Reinhart reported that the \$600,000 a year continued on for many years, and AMC was actually a granting agency, and they used some of the funds for start-ups of various transportation organizations. Unfortunately that money disappeared, and the AMC eventually became a member organization made up of councils and various association groups and transportation providers. There are currently 36 members, and Patrick continues efforts to increase that. AMC maintains a small board, and they are welcoming applications for new board members. They meet about once a month during the legislative session, and then every two to three months outside of the session.

Patrick stated that the AMC is purely advocacy at this time. At the State level, there is over \$10M of federal funds that flow into Alaska from the Federal Transit Administration yearly, and some of the money has match requirements. That federal money goes to the State Department of Transportation to the Community Transportation Section, and that funding is distributed statewide. On the state level, there aren't many funds put in, and in the last few years, the transit match funding has not been put in the budget by the administration. That funding helps organizations that receive the Federal Transit Administration funding with their match requirements. AMC has tried to get that money back into the budget, but it hasn't gone anywhere. They are reluctant to ask for it this again because funding is so tight this year.

Patrick Reinhart stated that the other pot of money AMC is keeping an eye on and is supporting is the \$1.3M in Human Services Transportation funding that comes



as a match program between the Trust and the State of Alaska. Over 16 applicants have applied at a request of \$1.6M, so there is obviously a demand for this program. It appears that the Governor has included the full \$1M from the general fund monies to match the Trust's \$300,000. AMC will continue to watch that in hopes it doesn't change, and they will advocate if there is an opportunity to increase that amount. He also noted that AMC is advocating that that funding pot be removed from DOT's purview because they have made the process very complicated.

AMC is watching for federal funding opportunities that the state can take advantage of. He believes the new administration under President Biden will be more favorable to transit and community transportation. If there are any opportunities, they can bring home to roost in Alaska, they will.

Patrick Reinhart encouraged SILC members to become a member of AMC if they aren't already, and concluded his presentation.

### **AMHB/ABADA UPDATE**

Bev Schoonover, executive director of the Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) presented to the SILC as follows:

#### **Who We Are:**

- The Alaska Mental Health Board (AMHB) and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (ABADA) are the State agencies statutorily charged with planning and coordinating behavioral health services funded by the State of Alaska.
- The Boards are also tasked with evaluating federal and state laws concerning mental health, alcohol, and other drug and substance misuse prevention and treatment services. (AS 47.30.661, AS 44.29.100)
- The Boards are comprised of Governor-appointed citizen volunteers and non-voting State agency representatives.
- ABADA and AMHB work together to advocate for programs and services that promote healthy, independent, productive Alaskans.

#### **What We Do:**

As the state's behavioral health planning councils, we:

- Advocate for and with Alaskans with mental health and substance use disorders.
- Assist in the evaluation of Alaska’s publicly funded behavioral health system.
- Educate the public and policymakers about mental health and substance misuse use issues.
- Provide a public forum for the discussion of issues related to mental health and substance use issues.
- Advise, plan, and help coordinate with state and local governments, Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and partner advisory boards, community organizations, and the public on issues related to mental health and substance use disorders.
- Provide recommendations to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority concerning the Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Program and the use of money in the Mental Health Trust settlement income account.

**Mutual Priorities with the SILC:**

- Mental health/well-being of Alaskans
- Transportation
- Housing
- Employment

**FY’22 Budget Items – Operating/Mental Health Bills:**

- Public Assistance Field Services - \$7M reduction. Currently 231 Alaskans on the waiting list for public assistance.
- General Relief/Temporary Assisted Living – small decrement.
- Medicaid Program Reduction - \$35M reduction in general funds. Can use carryover funds from the increased federal match because of COVID. The decrement is not a concern for this next fiscal year, but it will be difficult to get the State money back into the budget in FY’23.
- For the first time ever this year without precedence, the Governor has proposed appropriations in the operating and mental health budget bills, and in the supplemental and capital bills for a fund source called Mental Health Trust Reserve. These funds were not included or approved by the Trustees in their fiscal ’22 budget. It’s very unclear if the Governor or the legislature has any authority to touch this funding. The Trust has sent a letter to Senate Finance to explain the situation. They have met with the Department of Law, and the Department of Law says that these appropriates are likely a breach of the Alaska Mental Health Trust settlement account.

- Aging and Disability Resource Centers – this budget item is still at risk because it includes funding from the Mental Health Trust Reserve as noted above.
- Rural Housing Coordinator Positions – an increase.

**Budget Items – FY’22 Governor’s Capital Bill (some allocated to the Mental Health Trust Reserve Account):**

- Assistive Technology
- Home Modification and Upgrades to Retain Housing
- Deferred Maintenance and Accessibility Improvements
- AHFC Beneficiary and Special Needs Housing
- AHFC Homeless Assistance Program
- Coordinated Transportation and Vehicles.

**Bills:**

- HB 20 – Medical Assistance Program
- HB 43/SB 19 – Extend Special Education Service Agency (SESA)
- SB 56 – Extending COVID-19 Disaster Emergency
- SB 47 – Vehicle Registration for Persons with Disabilities

**Partner/Collaborate**

- Joint Advocacy Friday Teleconferences. Please e-mail [advocacy.coordinator@mhtrust.org](mailto:advocacy.coordinator@mhtrust.org) to sign up for bill tracking spreadsheet, action alerts, and log-in information for Friday meetings.
- AMHB/ABADA Board Meeting:
  - March 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> via Zoom
  - Public Comment - 10:00 to 11:00 am, March 11<sup>th</sup>

Michael Christian asked if there has been any movement on SB 26, the repeal of the certificate of need. Bev Schoonover doesn’t believe it’s had a hearing yet, but it is on their bill tracking spreadsheet, and she will let him know if there has been any movement.

**PUBLIC TESTIMONY**

A public testimony period was offered. No members of the public appeared.

**RECESS**

The meeting recessed at 1:00 p.m.

**Friday, February 12, 2021**  
**CALL TO ORDER – 9:00 a.m.**

### **SDS UPDATE**

Anthony Newman expressed his appreciation for participating in the meeting. The overview provided in the meeting yesterday was valuable for him as a new member to both the Division of Senior and Disabilities Services and the SILC.

Anthony Newman referred to the continuum of care document and shared that what makes it such a useful document is that it takes the complicated agency of SDS and makes it simple to understand. The legislature really likes this document as well. He noted that it demonstrates the true cost saving value of home and community-based services as an alternative to institutional placements.

Anthony Newman stated that in the seven months he has been with SDS, the big focus has been on the COVID-19 response and ensuring vulnerable populations are protected. They have done extraordinary work in Alaska in protecting the vulnerable populations. They developed flexibilities using tools the State and federal government allowed to relax their services through the pandemic with Appendix K and the 1135 waiver. The Governor's emergency declaration allowed them to suspend certain regulations as well. If the Governor does not continue the emergency declaration, the Department of Law has advised that they can continue the flexibilities as long as the federal government backs them up. The one regulation that is in jeopardy because of the failure of the State to continue the disaster declaration is the General Relief Program assistance provided for assisted living homes, but they anticipate this will be a minimal impact.

Anthony Newman stated that virtually everybody from SDS is working from home. It has gone very well for staff, and they are looking at ways they can continue it. In addition, the flexibilities afforded the Division have allowed SDS to look at telework to deliver services to recipients through distance technology. In March they plan to initiate some focus groups to discuss what has worked well during the pandemic that they might want to continue permanently because it's a better way to deliver services.

Anthony Newman stated that SDS has distributed over \$4 million in COVID relief funding to help with supporting such things as in-home meal service, Aging and Disability Resource Centers, and giving funding to assisted living homes. Assisted

living homes and skilled nursing facilities were also able to apply for COVID mitigation funding.

Other activities of the Division include:

- John Lee's continued efforts with the vaccine plans.
- Home and community-based waiver renewal process. Includes more clarification around Supported Employment Services as well as refining the numbers of people allowed under each waiver. Also refining the language around the I/DD waiver to make it clear that the draw of people for that waiver can include attrition. Ric Nelson shared a concern that advocates and groups are not seeing the 50 draws come off the waitlist, and they are seeing that they are not picking any of the agencies. He asked Anthony Newman to explain the process. Anthony stated that he has heard that expressed, and he hopes they will see plenty of written comment about that concern so they will be able to explain it better if there are any misunderstandings.
- Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) went live January 1<sup>st</sup> meeting the CMS expectation to have a system in place.
- The big issue for SDS with the legislature this year is the General Relief Program of \$164,000.
- The Governor has not proposed any reductions in waiver services, hours of service, provider rates, or grants.
- Under the reorganization of the Department of Health and Social Services, SDS will remain under the Department of Health, and a new Department of Family and Community Services will house API, DJJ, Pioneer Homes, and OCS. SDS will be working on agreements with those respective agencies to ensure they can continue to communicate freely. They are hopeful that the splitting of the Department into two will allow the Department of Health to better align with the sister agencies that work in Medicaid. The Commissioner is hopeful that this change will allow him and other department leadership to spend more time exploring ideas they hear from stakeholders, staff, and service recipients.

## **ACCESS ALASKA UPDATE**

Eric Gurley was unavailable to present an update for Access Alaska.

## **ILC UPDATE**

Joyanna Geisler provided members of the SILC with a historical perspective of the Independent Living Center as well as their funding sources and community offices. She stated that today ILC has 17 staff and 13 different funding sources for a current budget of \$1.3 million.

Joyanna referred members of the SILC to the biannual report, and she noted that each of the offices write success stories or narratives about the individuals they work with for inclusion in the annual report.

Joyanna Geisler highlighted some of the programs of ILC as follows:

### **Supported Transportation Program**

ILC's Supported Transportation Program was started in 1997 in Soldotna. The program is now partially funded by the Department of Transportation, and the program is now offered in Homer, Central Peninsula, and Seward. They are also considering Kodiak. Each program looks a little different in each community. She explained the Central Peninsula program operation is that if an individual with a disability has a barrier to transportation, they complete an independent living intake and create an independent living plan. That allows the individual to purchase 30 vouchers a month at \$4 each, which is good for a one-way ride of up to \$12 with Alaska Cab, which is the contracted cab company ILC uses. The vouchers expire June 30<sup>th</sup> of each fiscal year, but they can carry over from month to month if they are not used. Alaska Cab has five accessible minivans they purchased themselves without assistance from the State or Department of Transportation. They also have approximately 20 other vehicles in their fleet. Alaska Cab has been a reputable, community-minded partner since 1997.

The Supported Transportation program is the most utilized program ILC offers. Approximately 200 individuals use the program, and a minimum of 9,000 rides per year are given. The wonderful thing about this program is that everyone contributes. The rider contributes their fare, the State contributes money, and Alaska Cab donates \$2 per ride. This program has been replicated in the Lower 48, and Arctic Access and SAIL operate similar types of programs in their areas.

### **Veterans Options for Independence, Choice, and Empowerment (VOICE)**

In 2015, ILC staff advocated for an option for veterans other than just a few hours a week of homemaker/home health aide services and nursing home care. Staff advocated vigorously with the Veterans Administration (VA) to develop the

VOICE program, and it's a four-way partnership between the VA; the veteran and their family; the fiscal management service, ARIS; and ILC. The veteran has to be enrolled in VA health care, and they have to have some hands-on care needs and meet the VA's nursing facility level of care.

Joyanna explained that the veteran is assessed with the VA's functional assessment, and that assessment is scored, which later turns into a monthly budget. The budget is developed, monitored, and spent by the veteran and their representative if they need one. ILC's role is to orient the veteran and help them complete the paperwork. She noted that most of the veterans use their budget to hire in-home supports. The budgets can be used for other things such as minor housing modifications, non-durable medical supplies, and assistive technology, but the veteran and/or their family decide how the money is spent. The budgets range from \$1,200 per month to \$21,000 at the high end, but the average budget is about \$3,500 per month.

Joyanna Geisler stated that SAIL has been trained to replicate this program in Southeast Alaska, and LINKS in the Mat-Su has also been trained and replicated the program there. There are currently over 100 veterans in the state of Alaska utilizing that program, with 45 of those being served through ILC.

Joyanna further explained that the VOICE program is fee for service, and ILC receives \$781 per month per veteran. ILC pays ARIS \$110 per month to do all the payroll, federal and state paperwork, and issue W-9s to employees so there is no paperwork or tax burden on the veteran.

Joyanna Geisler concluded by stating that she would advocate that SDS initiate a pilot program to see how this might work, and she believes the Trust would be interested in assisting in a pilot program similar to the VOICE program for Medicaid beneficiaries or Medicaid waiver users. Anthony Newman stated that he is very interested in learning more about this program. He noted that there has been a desire across the Division and across the stakeholder community that SDS move toward a more person-centered service system by putting the budgets into the hands of the recipients and letting them direct their services. He would like to learn more about the VA's assessment tools, and Joyanna will connect him with representatives of ARIS as well.

## **SAIL UPDATE**

Joan O’Keefe provided members of the SILC with a historical perspective of Southeast Alaska Independent Living (SAIL). She was thrilled to announce that Deb Etheridge will be joining SAIL as the assistant director.

Joan O’Keefe directed members of the SILC to her screen-shared presentation of SAIL’s 2020 annual report and highlighted the following:

- 18 veterans were enrolled in the VOICE program from 19 different Southeast communities.
- 24 individuals were diverted from nursing homes; and six other individuals were transitioned from nursing homes to lower levels of care. \$3.765 million of government funds were saved.
- In FY’20, 80 individuals were assisted with employment skills training through Pre-ETS.
- 178 people were helped with employment last fiscal year, and they had great Pre-ETS programs in Juneau, Haines, and Sitka.
- SAIL offices include Yakutat, Haines, Juneau, Sitka, Kake, Klawock, and Ketchikan. From those offices, over 24 locations throughout Southeast Alaska are served.
- SAIL helped 26 families and businesses receive home modifications and assessments in Southeast, and they oversaw 75 additional home modification reports throughout the rest of the state.
- Half of SAIL’s consumers are age 60 or older, and their largest disability demographic is physical disability followed closely by mental health. The number of consumers with mental health needs increases yearly.
- SAIL’s Taxi Program served 420 unduplicated individuals with about 7,000 rides. SAIL continues to write grants for accessible vehicles, and two accessible taxis have been delivered to Ketchikan.
- SAIL has a donor program and recognizes individuals at varying levels of donation. SAIL’s funding is 19 percent federal, 37 percent state, 21 percent municipal and foundation grants, 17 percent fee for service, and 6 percent individual and corporate donations. SAIL is currently a \$2.5 million organization with over 30 funding sources.
- SAIL offers peer support groups for mental health, low vision, traumatic brain injury, youth and adult recreation, young adult skill building, deaf and hard of hearing, blind and low vision, parents of children with disabilities, and autism. In FY’20, there were 291 total meetings, and going to a virtual platform has greatly increased the reach of peer support groups to other



communities statewide that can join. Once they start meeting in person again, they will continue the virtual option of attendance.

- This past year SAIL has been doing a lot of racial training, and they have a committee that has board and staff representation.

Joan O’Keefe shared that she has taken a second executive director job as the ED of United Human Services, which is the project that’s building a non-profit center in Juneau. SAIL bought the property for this center, and they want it to be SAIL’s permanent home. This project is over \$6 million, and they are about one-third of the way there in fundraising. They have 10-year commitments from SAIL, Alaska Legal Services, United Way of Southeast, Disability Law Center, NAMI Juneau, Suicide Prevention Coalition, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and Cancer Connection. There is room on the campus for a future expansion in phase 2.

### **ARCTIC ACCESS UPDATE**

Denice Gilroy shared that the Northeast region serves approximately 37 villages and ranges between 300 and 400 consumers. Arctic Access receives \$183,000 in yearly funding, and she also applies for other smaller grants. She is the only staff member, and she also works with Jill Peters, a special education teacher at the junior-senior high school.

Denice stated that Arctic Access does the Pre-ETS program, and last year they had 37 youth. The youth that participate in the program are the youth that participate in JOBZ Club after school and seek out assistance with homework support, job searches, and driver’s licenses. Jill Peters also teaches job supports in the high school in conjunction with NACTEC. Youth are brought in from the villages, and they get to use simulators and explore career paths. She noted that this year 13 youth were able to obtain driver’s licenses, and some of those youth have been able to save up money from their work in the Pre-ETS program to purchase cars. Another Pre-ETS program has been the work study program that six youth have participated in, and they will be reaching out to the villages with the program as well. Some of the youth are using their paychecks to help buy food and pay bills to help support their families.

Denice Gilroy shared that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their area. People are behind in their rent, and there are food and home care insecurities. Many seniors and elders depend on family members to help support and assist them; and when family members themselves are struggling and reaching out for assistance, they are unable to support or care for their elder or senior. Arctic

Access has been able to step in and help with that respect, and she noted that people who are homebound are really starting to struggle with emotional issues. They have been trying to get people connected with iPads and internet so elders can talk to each other and share their native language.

Denice Gilroy reported that there has been an issue with heat in the region recently as the temperatures have been as low at -37. Many seniors and elders are cordoning off their homes with blankets and are living in one room with a space heater, often a gas or propane heater, which is very toxic. She has been working with other service providers to help figure out what is broken with peoples' heaters so they can be fixed. Another issue arising from the cold snap has been broken pipes and 2-by-4s cracking and splitting in peoples' walls.

Denice Gilroy stated that Arctic Access has a loan closet in collaboration with Norton Sound Health Corporation. Arctic Access collects used equipment from Norton Sound, cleans it up, fixes it, and redistributes it out to the villages.

The Northeast region benefited from seven ramps with the assistance of the SILC and ILC this year. They also did four roll-in shower installations. They found themselves working more with the SILC and ILC than RurAL CAP this year because RurAL CAP seemed to have issues in coordinating services because of the pandemic, so RurAL CAP only did a couple of ramps and one roll-in shower this year. She would love to see the SILC be able to acquire more grant funds that would help build ramps in the villages. RurAL CAP does larger communities, but it seems they will not spend the funds to go to the very small, remote villages. With the support of Michael and Joyanna, they have been able to put ramps in villages that would have never been supported otherwise.

Denice Gilroy stated that she sits on the Alaska Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (AKCH2) for the state of Alaska as well as the Housing Coalition for the City of Nome. Homelessness is a huge issue in the Northeast region. She stated that there are often 20 people living in one home, which has been very difficult during the pandemic. They have been working with Norton Sound, clinics, and IRAs to get entire households vaccinated to help alleviate some of the COVID insecurities. Also in their region they are seeing domestic violence and food insecurities, and no one is going to work resulting in unpaid rents or utilities.

Denice stated that some fun activities that took place this summer included kayaking and rafting with consumers as well as berry picking and lots of fishing.

Most of them took their fish to the senior center, and the senior center has been doing lunchtime home deliveries for elders.

Denice Gilroy concluded her presentation by noting that she is pleased to see the good work of ILC and SAIL, but her limited funding doesn't allow for her to engage in much more than travelling to the villages. She looks forward to the SILC working with Michael to adjust the funding formula, which would allow her to hire another employee which could hopefully lead to being able to apply for more grants.

## **CLOSING DISCUSSION**

Irma Goodwine asked if CILs can help pay for an American Sign Language class for an individual whose speech is starting to impair. Joan O'Keefe and Denice Gilroy suggested that Irma contact Access Alaska because her region is served by Access. Joan noted that SAIL, Arctic Access, and ILC have limited "last resort" funds to go for things that IL advocates can't find other money for. Doug Toelle also suggested that she should look into the Trust's mini grant program.

Michael Christian opened up a closing discussion to gauge how Council members thought the meeting went and if they found the information and content useful. Anthony Newman really appreciated this meeting, and the review of the SILC's authorities was very educational for him.

Council members also appreciated the ADA training.

Doug Toelle commented that he received his third letter from the Governor reappointing him to the SILC, and he noted some terminology in the letter that the Governor's office and Boards and Commissions need to be aware of, and that is the use of the term "special needs." Michael Christian stated that he will bring that to the attention of staff.

## **Bylaws**

Michael Christian asked members of the Council if they would like him to move forward with a rewrite of the bylaws based on the recommendations from Foraker. Ric Nelson suggested the formation of a workgroup to go into the recommendations in more depth. Michael suggested setting up a time to meet with Mike Walsh again after Council members review his document. Michael will send

out an e-mail asking for volunteers for the bylaws workgroup. Jessica Chapman volunteered to participate in the workgroup.

**ADJOURN**

Doug Toelle **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Nona Safra. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

**Minutes Approved: 4/30/21 – P.D.**