



FLORIDA INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL, Inc.

State Plan for Independent Living Advocacy Timeline Goal

Volume 1, Issue 6
August 2006

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Please submit information you would like to contribute to this publication to Molly Gosline at mg@polaris.net

The Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. welcomes Don Dawkins to their staff. Mr. Dawkins will be filling the position of Advocacy Coordinator.

The Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. would like to propose a similar initiative for transportation alternatives for Floridians with disabilities similar to the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) initiative described below.

The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) received a grant to demonstrate the effectiveness of a voucher model to provide transportation for people with disabilities living in rural areas. The grant is funded by RSA (U. S. Department of Education) for \$1,494,218 over a five-year period (2001-2006).

The TRAVELER'S CHEQUE (TC) program was designed to explore the strategy of using vouchers for transportation provision to people with disabilities living in rural areas and to provide effective strategies for addressing this important problem. The demonstration focused on how small towns and rural communities can successfully organize and operate a flexible supported transportation program for people with disabilities.

A total of ten sites in ten states, Massachusetts, Utah, Kansas, New Mexico, Alaska, Montana, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Georgia, and Minnesota participated in the project. Four sites, three CILs and a Section 121 project collaborated in the development of the grant proposal and were preselected to participate in the project.

A total of 50 programs submitted applications to the competition and ten sites were selected to represent ten very diverse communities so that the results and replication materials developed could be widely applied. Diversity in location, population density, geography, minority populations, disability groups served, transportation availability and transportation experience were emphasized.

The trained Community Transportation Coordinators (CTC's) initiated the local programs. First, they determined how to allocate TC resources (i.e., number of participants to be served, amounts per person, etc.). CTCs negotiated with local public and private providers to accept the vouchers at a negotiated rate and then directed them to recruit participants. Individual participants were enrolled and completed an extensive enrollment form. The rider and the CTC then developed an Individual Transportation Plan designed to help each participant formulate a plan to effectively use the vouchers with either volunteer drivers, public, private, or other available providers in the community. Participants calculated their needs in terms of number of rides and number of miles per ride.

They then received an initial allocation in miles and an orientation in how to use TRAVELER'S CHEQUES. To date, a total of 588 adults with various disabilities have participated in the TC program. The number of consumers served was related to the priorities established by the sites. Some sites elected to provide a large number of consumers with partial support of their transportation needs, while other sites provided full support to a smaller number of consumers.

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August Calendar

August 1-2, 2006 9:00 a.m.
Planning Committee Meeting

*Radisson Resort
Orlando- Celebration
2900 Parkway Blvd.
Kissimmee, FL 34747
1-407-396-7000*

*Please Note
Call FILC @ 850-488-5624 prior to teleconference for call in number.*

August 3, 2006 1:30 p.m.
Advocacy Committee Teleconference

August 9-11, 2006
Technical Assistance visit to the CIL of Broward

August 10, 2006 1:30 p.m.
Planning Committee Teleconference

August 10, 2006 2:30 p.m.
Evaluation Committee Teleconference

August 17, 2006 1:30 p.m.
Finance Committee Teleconference

August 24, 2006 1:30 p.m.
Nominating Committee Teleconference

August 24, 2006 2:30 p.m.
Executive Committee Teleconference

Activities initiated/hosted by the Florida Independent Living Council are open to the public. For information about these or any other FILC events please contact the FILC office @ (850)488-5624.

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Although volunteer drivers provided only 43% of the trips, they accounted for 71% of the total miles used by consumers. Transit systems provided 44% of the rides, but only accounted for 21% of the miles logged by consumers. Transit providers tended to provide many short rides in the larger "cities" for example Hays, KS and Marshall, MN. Taxi providers also tended to be used for shorter trips within town and accounted for 13% of the trips, but only 7% of the miles.

Consumers could choose to use any providers available to them. Their choices averaged over all ten sites were as follows: 42.2% of consumers used only volunteers, 31.5% used only available public transit services, 11.9% used only taxis, 9.5% used volunteers and public transit only, and 4.6% used volunteers and taxis.

The trip purpose percentages varied significantly by site. For example, in Kansas only trips to and from work were permitted and 100% of the trips were for work. In Utah, where a Center for Independent Living is partnering with the local Vocational Rehabilitation office only 35% of the trips were to and from work, while 44% of the trips were for transportation to and from school and 21% were for medical purposes.

During the first four years of this project 171 people obtained employment (93 full time and 78 part time jobs). The number of new jobs obtained during the third and fourth years was higher than during the first two years especially at sites where strong working relationships with VR have been developed. A similar number of consumers who were employed when they enrolled in the program or who obtained jobs in previous years reported that the program has either helped them maintain their current job or improve their employment (found a better job, were able to increase the number of hours worked or obtained a more rewarding job with their original employer).

The Traveler's Cheque voucher model pilot study clearly showed that, given the resources, people with disabilities can effectively meet their own employment and IL goals. The TRAVELER'S CHEQUE program appears to be highly effective in helping people with disabilities in a wide variety of rural U.S. areas to develop and secure transportation.

The TC voucher model is extremely flexible and adoptable by any local public or private agency, or a consortium of agencies as a stand-alone program or supplement to existing transportation systems. The TC model offers many advantages over traditional, agency-driven systems. Unlike scheduled services, rides need not be restricted to hours and days of operation; more hours of service can be available to riders. Second, service agencies (i.e. Area Agencies on Aging, CILs) may have lower direct overhead and administrative costs that can be shifted to actual trips. Third, vouchers can increase public/private cooperation and business for local bus services or taxis. Fourth, the TC voucher model can start with minimal investment or risk and grow incrementally as demand and resources permit. Finally, because the vouchers themselves document trips, their use can be monitored with a high degree of detail and accuracy.

The TRAVELER'S CHEQUE program is a viable new transportation strategy for supporting people with disabilities that builds on the independent living paradigm and philosophy of consumer control. Participants improved the quality of their lives and their community participation by creatively combining and using these and other resources. Participants described their sense of relief and security, knowing that they could get a ride, if they needed it and they expressed their renewed self-respect because they were now able to pay for rides provided by others.

"Independence Worth Preserving"

Centers for Independent Living

Suncoast Center for Independent Living serving Sarasota and Manatee Counties, (941) 351-9545

Coalition for Independent Living Options serving Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach Counties, (561) 966-4288

Center for Independent Living of Broward serving Broward County, (954) 722-6400

Disability Resource Center serving Holmes, Jackson, Washington, Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Liberty, and Franklin Counties, (850) 769-6890

Center for Independent Living of the Florida Keys serving the Florida Keys, (305) 453-3491

Center for Independent Living of North Central Florida serving Hamilton, Suwanee, Columbia, Lafayette, Dixie, Gilchrist, Union, Bradford, Alachua, Levy, Marion, Putnam, Citrus, Sumter, and Hernando Counties, (352) 378-7474

Self Reliance, Inc. serving Hillsborough County, (813) 375-3965

Center for Independent Living of South Florida serving Dade County, (305) 751-8025

Independent Living Resource Center of Northeast Florida serving Baker, Nassau, Duval, Clay, and St. Johns Counties, (904) 399-8484

Center for Independent Living of Southwest Florida serving Charlotte, Glades, Lee, Hendry, and Collier Counties, (239) 277-1447

Center for Independent Living of Northwest Florida serving Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, and Walton Counties, (850) 595-5566

Caring and Sharing Center for Independent Living serving Pasco and Pinellas Counties, (727) 577-0065

Ability 1st serving Gadsden, Leon, Wakulla, Jefferson, Madison, and Taylor Counties, (850) 575-9621

Victory Lane Center for Independent Living serving Flagler and Volusia Counties, (386) 671-1960

Space Coast Center for Independent Living serving Brevard and Indian River Counties, (321) 784-9008

Center for Independent Living of Central Florida serving Polk, Hardee, DeSoto, Highlands, Lake, Seminole, Orange, and Osceola Counties, (407) 623-1070

Please feel free to distribute this letter to any other persons/organizations that may be interested.

It is the mission of the Florida Independent Living Council to assist and advocate for people with disabilities in achieving equal opportunities. Our vision is to foster change via leadership, collaboration and visibility.