



Washington
Statewide
Independent
Living Council

WASILC January Quarterly Meeting

April 16th, 2026

9am To 4pm

Council Members Present:

Dion Graham, Advocate of and for Individuals with Disabilities, Seattle

Kimberly Meck, Center Director Representative, Seattle

Tony Hester, Advocate of and for Individuals with Disabilities, Puyallup

Sue Pniewski, Advocate of and for Individuals with Disabilities, Seattle

Council Staff Present:

Courtney Williams, Executive Director, Washington Statewide Independent Living Council (WASILC)

Jim House, Disability/AFN Integration Manager, Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP)

Rebecca Rodriguez, Executive Assistant, Washington Statewide Independent Living Council (WASILC)

Guest Presenters:

Tricia Eyerly, Assistant Director, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB)

Elizabeth Gordon, Executive Director, Washington State Governors Council on Disabilities (GCDE)

Faith Brown, Executive Director, Center for Independence (CFI)

Mayra Colazo, Executive Director, Central Washington Disability Resources (CWDR)

Mark Leeper, Executive Director, Disability Action Center (DAC)

Erin Ferrier, Program Manager, Disability Action Center Northeast Washington (DACNeW)

Approval of April 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion: I would like to make a motion to approve the April meeting minutes as presented.

First: Toney Hester

Second: Dion Graham

Vote: Favor: All

Opposed: None

APPROVED

Approval of April 2026 Agenda

Motion: I approve the amended changes to the agenda for today.

Edite to agenda: COURTNEY WILLIAMS: There were two others that may have been missed. Instead of me reporting on financials, Dion Graham will be reporting financials. And then we said approval of July minutes, it's

January of 2025. So you might need to put forth a new motion, Kimberly, with those two!

First: Dion Graham

Second: Tony Hester

Vote: Favor: All

Opposed: None

APPROVED

WASILC Budget – Dion Graham

- Operations & Program Expenses
 - Accessibility: \$4,434
 - Interpreters and Translators: \$2,532
 - Meeting Essentials: \$1,902
- Learning & Development: \$4,649
 - Travel: \$2,869
 - National Network Dues: \$1,780
- CIEP Reported Surplus: \$48,374
 - Budget Note: Courtney Williams clarified that this high surplus is temporary and due to DOH billing cycles. The program has not yet been billed for half of the year, but spending remains on target with the allocated budget.
- Spending is roughly \$24,000 per month, which aligns exactly with the target

Executive Director report – Courtney Williams

- Rural Landscape Challenges: 32 out of 39 Washington counties are identified as rural, resulting in significant barriers to transportation, healthcare, and social services.

- National Collaboration: Leadership met with Florida's Executive Director, Beth Meyer, to study and emulate their established foundation and standardized processes for inclusive emergency management.
- Cross-Disability Focus: Initiatives aim to define the cross-disability spectrum and give individuals with lived experience a platform to vocalize their specific needs during emergencies.
- Operational Connection Trainings:
 - Targeted in-person outreach sessions are scheduled across Central and Eastern Washington to meet underserved communities where they are.
 - Designed to partner first responders and emergency management professionals directly with individuals with lived experience to build relationships and mutual awareness.
 - A virtual training session is planned for the future to allow for broader statewide engagement.
- Movement is being driven by collaboration between leadership, Jim House (CIEP program), and council member Susan (Sue), an emergency management expert.
- Council Development & Education
 - Strategic Growth: The council is actively filling vacancies to ensure membership reflects state needs, elevates historically unheard voices, and brings on committed advocates.
 - Washington-Specific Training Cohort: Partnering with *Mechanical* to establish a tailored training plan to clarify roles

and responsibilities between WASILC and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

- Core Curriculum Focus: Training modules will focus heavily on:
 - Fiscal oversight
 - Foundations in government
 - SPIL development
 - Advocacy and systems change
- Capacity Rebuilding: Moving past a period of limited operational capacity caused by past leadership transitions and staffing shortages.
- Strategic Planning & Future Vision
 - SPIL vs. Strategic Plan: While the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) serves as the strict, compliance-monitored roadmap, it is difficult to revise.
 - Upcoming Summer Session: A dedicated strategic planning session is planned for the summer months once more council members are formally appointed.
 - Five-Year Forecasting: The strategic plan will act as a flexible, easily pivotable tool to forecast where the organization wants to be in five years, effectively bridging policy with practice.
 - Legislative Focus: The Legislative Committee will leverage this framework to strengthen visibility, accessibility, and direct connections with state decision-makers.
- Council Recruitment & Tribal Partnerships
 - Adopting a "slow and steady" approach to appointing council members to ensure new additions directly reflect Washington's

diverse demographics, possess authentic lived experience, and align with the core mission.

- The council is actively focusing on cultivating, building, and rebuilding relationships with tribal nations.
- Aiming to bring tribal communities to the table as potential council members to ensure the state's varied needs and unique regional variables are fully represented.
- The Strategic Imperative for a Strategic Plan
 - An Organizational First: WASILC has historically never had an independent strategic plan, previously operating primarily under the SPIL.
 - The SPIL: Defines the overarching statewide goals and the baseline metrics for success.
 - The Strategic Plan: Acts as the practical operational guide—the "how we get there"—directing specific day-to-day activities, community outreach, and networking.
- A strategic plan is a living document that can quickly pivot, breathe, and adapt to unexpected crises (such as a national pandemic).
- Written direction provides a measurable value that allows external partners to see where the organization is heading and offer targeted collaboration to strengthen the independent living network.

Public Comment

Shawn Latham: Hello, my name is Shawn Latham. It's good to see some of you again. For those of you that don't know, I'm the Director of Allies in Advocacy, a non-profit technical assistance and education self-advocacy

organization; and I'm also the Policy Coordinator for the Self-Advocates in Leadership Coalition, a coalition working on legislative advocacy; and I'm a former employee at two of your centers, just mostly listening in today to see what's going on.

I have a few things you may want to be aware of. It looks like Home and Community Living Administration is breaking back up into the Developmental Disability Administration and I'm assuming Aging and Long-Term Care Administration. According to Secretary Ramirez and Assistant Secretary Rector, they need to do this to protect themselves from federal issues.

Courtney, I told Bee Rector yesterday at the 50th anniversary to reach out to you. And then second, we, the self-advocates, are going to start a work group on the fourth Thursday at 12:30, looking at how to protect Olmstead in case we see any federal challenges to it. Anyone can join.

Lastly, I will stay Allies in Advocacy will have our annual public meeting on July 7th from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. at the Arc of King County Legacy Office in Sea-Tac. I will leave my contact information in the chat.

Courtney Williams: Thank you for the plug for Ms. Bee Rector. We worked together in the past and we actually had a meeting earlier this year, and she's really about connecting work to both centers for independent living and our mission. I appreciate you.

Kimberly Meck: Thanks, Shawn. I appreciate it. I put a question to you. Is CDAN still around?

Shawn Latham: That's the group I was talking about earlier. It's kind of between DRW and governor's office. They are on a hiatus for another month. They will be back.

Kimberly Meck: So they're between DRW and GCDE.

Courtney Williams: I made an error, Shawn. I'm sorry. Wait, one second. I said that we are not included. Elizabeth, we are included. Those meetings I've attended before virtually. So sorry. I thought it was one group versus another.

Kimberly Meck: Great. I just wanted to repeat what Shawn had said. For those of you who are not aware, CDAN, Cross-Disability Advocacy Network and Shawn mentioned they're on a hiatus for a month. Elizabeth Gordon is with the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues in Employment, and she says if you would like an invitation to the CDAN meeting, let her know and she will add you. And Courtney is admitting she lied. I'm not going to say it was a lie. It was an error.

Courtney Williams: I heard one thing. Anyway, Elizabeth is a wonderful partner and we are included. I have the invites on my calendar. So appreciate you, Elizabeth. Sorry.

Kimberly Meck: Thank you, Shawn. I appreciate that. I look forward to -- I

think I have about 15 different email addresses from you, quite frankly, Shawn. So I would love to get your most latest email address because I think I definitely have some people who would be really interested in that work group.

Shawn Latham: Okay, sounds good.

Kimberly Meck: Awesome. Look forward to hearing from you. So do we have any other public comments? Anything on anybody's mind?

Courtney Williams: It might put somebody on the spot. Krysta, my friend, are you willing to share your message to me? I think everybody needs to hear what you're saying. And if not, that's okay. You can just say Courtney, don't ever put me on the spot again.

Okay, I think it's appropriate. Krysta, are you available to unmute yourself, my friend?

Kimberly Meck: Rebecca, just in case there might be some issues with unmuting, perhaps you might send a request to unmute to Krysta, just in case.

Courtney Williams: Krysta is from the Cascade yeah Deaf Nation in Washington. And so she's supporting -- that group supports our Deaf and Deaf-plus community, including the BIPOC Deaf community. And it's a group that we need to learn more from, and so she's welcoming the

opportunity for our council to meet because, again, that's a population we're needing to get to know. So I appreciate partners like Krysta.

She thumb's up, so she's okay with me saying it. I figured you would be, because we want to promote the work that you're doing and I wanted to make sure we said that out loud. So thank you for thinking of us. Thank you for joining, and it's something that we will follow up with. Appreciate you.

Kimberly Meck: Thank you very much, Krysta. Always looking to find good partners. So this is Kimberly. And since it's public comment time, I will just share when most of you joined, Courtney and I were talking about something, and it's actually related to transportation. I just tie this briefly to the State Plan for Independent Living because often when we do our Community Listening Sessions regarding what the community feels that we should be working on in the SPIL, we hear several key things that come up that we don't have the ability to control a lot of.

There's advocacy that we can do with these topics, but there's not a lot actually physically that we can do. And those are housing and transportation. I am part of -- in my other job, I am part of the Find a Ride Advisory Group. If you're not aware of that, it has a ton of really cool things that has to do with the ability to find transportation in Pierce, King, Snohomish counties, using all of the transportation resources.

We had a presentation yesterday from a group of people from Oregon regarding some dataset. It kind of was Greek to me and it kind of went in one year and out the other, but it stuck enough for me to say I need to

introduce Courtney to these people. The dataset is basically use of public transportation options. It's not rider maps or anything like that. It's actually use data of all the transportation options on a statewide level, and they used it in Oregon to do quite a bit of transportation planning.

The Oregon legislature actually commissioned some of the work to be done to identify alternative transportation options. And I just thought it would be amazing to connect Courtney to that group to find out more about how it's being used. I know there's a project being done in Washington. I don't have a lot of details on it.

But Courtney, I know that Dean Sydnor, I believe you know him, he's actually connected to that group as well and said that he would be happy to facilitate an introduction. So I'm really excited because data is what makes the world go round and it's what helps people plan and decide on things. And so it may mean that we have an opportunity to actually do more education about the lack of transportation in some of our transportation deserts, and specific transportation options, also.

Courtney Williams: Thank you, Kimberly. You chair of the Leg Committee, so these are the kind of connections and opportunities that the Legislative and Advocacy Committee can help elevate these issues to our decision-makers. Because again, they don't often hear from us.

Now, we partner greatly with Centers for Independent Living when it comes to our legislative advocacy. But we're also an independent council, so things that our community is seeing is something that we want to make sure we're elevating. So you'll hear more about the Legislative Committee.

Hopefully you're engaging and hopefully you can engage because there's a lot of exciting things in the coming year. Dion?

Dion Graham: Yeah. This is Dion. Interesting that this subject comes up, because in the picture back ground that you see me, that was a picture taken in Detroit from about 2015-ish. And while I was there, I was at the Blacks in Government Conference, and they were talking about -- there was one session that spoke about combining transportation agencies all within an app. And this would include agencies like Uber, Lyft, can Para transit.

So all a person would have to do, disability or not disability, is log into this app to see what type of services are available in the area, what the costs are for each, which ones are connected. I don't know what happened to that, but I would be very curious if this group may be involved in similar discussions. And if so, or even if not, I would like to be part of that as well.

Kimberly Meck: Thanks, Dion. I appreciate that. What you're talking about sounds very similar to the Find a Ride project. I posted a web page for chat for anybody who's interested in it. This group got a significant project grant to be able to do all of this. And the beauty of it all is it's fully accessible. If you ever have an accessibility issue, you just bring it up to them and they work to try and fix it.

Right now, it's only for Pierce, King and Snohomish, but the hope would be that at some point it could get bigger. But we're definitely going to note your name down as a volunteer to participate in any activities that we

come up with for that.

Dion Graham: Sounds good.

Kimberly Meck: Do we have any additional public comment? Hearing none, seeing no indications of, we will close public comment period. I do want to remind people that just because we have a public comment period during our SILC meetings, that's not the only time we want to hear from you. You can go to our web page and find all of our contact information, including a phone number if you would like to talk verbally to Courtney.

She will welcome any comments, questions, suggestions. And we will respond back to them. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any additional information you would like to share with us.

Standing Committee Report Out

Executive Committee- Kimberly Meck, Chair

- The executive committee has been reduced to just two active members following a recent departure.
- Dr. Summers has stepped down from her roles as council treasurer and WASILC member due to personal reasons.
- The council is currently operating at a minimized capacity with only four active members.
- **Ex-Officio Leadership Updates:**
 - Dana Phelps from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) remains the active ex-officio member, though she was

recently appointed as the interim Assistant Secretary for DSHS.
The council is awaiting formal notice on whether this promotion will impact her role with WASILC.

- With only four active members, the council currently holds five vacant voting positions.
- Two candidates have successfully completed their official applications, cleared the governor's office vetting process, and been reviewed by the executive committee:
 - Josie Garcia
 - Leslie Erickson
 - The SILC executive committee feels confident in both candidates and is prepared to formally recommend them to the governor's office for official appointment.

Motion: I would take a motion from Council to approve moving those individuals' names forward to the governor's office for appointment official appointment to WASILC.

First: Tony Hester **Second:** Dion Graham

Vote: Favor: All **Opposed:** None **APPROVED**

- Courtney Williams: There if you remember we got advance, we moved faster than we thought. The governor Council or the governor's office have already authorized their appointment so Kimberly, we could ratify this vote to be a vote on improving them as councilmembers.

Motion: I make a motion to approve Leslie and Josie to the council.

First: Dion Graham **Second:** Tony Hester

Vote: Favor: All **Opposed:** None **APPROVED**

Motion: I motion to appoint Tony for the remainder of this term as the secretary for WASILC.

First: Sue Pniewski **Second:** Dion Graham

Vote: Favor: All **Opposed:** None **APPROVED**

Education & Outreach – Dion Graham & Hannah Adira

- The committee is currently small, consisting of only two active members, actively seeking new members to join
- Updated all of WASILC's core promotional and informational materials, including the official website, brochures, and informational handouts.
- Overhauled and updated the training and orientation materials used to welcome newly appointed council members.
- Upcoming Cross-Disability Virtual Panel, hosting a virtual cross-disability panel scheduled for next week.
 - Bringing together community leaders, legislators, agency partners, and community members to educate them on the realities of living independently in Washington.
- Hannah emphasized that the panel will go beyond just storytelling by highlighting specific life-pack and self-advocacy skills.
- Strategic Value: Bridging Lived Experience with Policy

Youth & Young Adult – Courtney Williams & Josie Garcia

- Urgent request for council members to join this committee, emphasizing that youth involvement directly impacts and intersects with all other focus areas, including education, outreach, and legislative advocacy.
- Actively seeking creative ideas, strategies, and feedback on how to effectively engage the younger generation.

- ESD Partnership Strategy: To find the most direct route to Washington's youth, the committee bypassed individual school outreach and partnered with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and regional Educational Service Districts (ESDs).
- The committee has established two clear, specific asks for its educational partners:
 - Recruiting youth to participate actively within WASILC committees.
 - Positioning young advocates to be formally appointed to the full statewide Council.

Legislative & Policy Committee – Kimberly Meck & Tony Hester

- Legislative Advocacy Day 2027 Planning
- WASILC is establishing an independent advocacy day specifically tailored to independent living issues, carving out its own space alongside other disability advocacy groups.
- The event is officially scheduled for **April 2nd** during the state's next long legislative session. The team has already reserved the Capitol Rotunda and the Columbia Room in Olympia.
- Hybrid Engagement Model
- The Legislative Committee is developing an "Advocacy 101" training curriculum to demystify the legislative process for consumers.
 - The training will place a heavy emphasis on personal storytelling, teaching advocates how to craft quick, high-impact pitches that tie civil rights and legal issues directly to the human impact of policies.

- The committee will establish unified talking points to ensure all legislative meetings are structured, clear, and relevant to the council's broader mission.
- WASILC will align its educational messaging with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), who contract with professional lobbyists. This structural partnership ensures that community-driven stories are backed up by formal legislative asks made by CIL lobbyists.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) – Kimbelry Meck, Chair

- The 2027–2030 Cycle: SPIL plans are drafted every few years. The upcoming submission is due to federal regulators in July 2027, and it will govern operations from October 1, 2027, through September 30, 2030.
- The active SPIL document is hosted publicly on the WASILC website, and digital copies can be requested directly via email from Executive Director Courtney Williams.
- The dedicated SPIL Committee is composed of:
 - Directors from the statewide Centers for Independent Living (CILs)
 - WASILC staff members
 - Two active council members (including the speaker)
- The committee is actively seeking one additional council member to join. Courtney Williams will be reaching out to newly appointed members to gauge their interest and alignment with the committee's scope.

- The committee is designing a comprehensive statewide survey to capture critical, data-driven feedback from the disability community regarding current issue areas.
- WASILC will host structured community meetings, partner listening sessions, and open forum listening sessions to inform the initial drafts.
- Early 2027 is earmarked for formal draft consolidation. These initial drafts will be brought before the full SILC for structural review and subsequently posted for a public comment period.
- The committee has established a strict, phased timeline to track benchmarks and ensure on-time submission.

Program Reports

Coalition on Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP) – Jim House

- **CIEP After Action Report (AAR) & Disaster Review**
 - The report represents three months of collaborative work reviewing the state's emergency response to the December Washington flooding, specifically evaluating Access and Functional Needs (AFN).
 - The full document spans over 100 pages with dense categories, but it features a plain-language summary for easier reading. It will be shared as a Google Doc link, with Word documents available upon request for accessibility.
 - The AAR is currently a working document open to further comments, additions, and updates from the council.

- The report utilizes the comprehensive **CMIST** framework to categorize gaps in the flood response:
 - **Communication (C):** Critically highlighted the absence of American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters during urgent television news broadcasts, a systemic issue that has since been brought directly to the Governor's Office.
 - **Maintaining Health (M) & Independence (I):** Examined the long remediation timelines and processes required for individuals with disabilities to safely return to independent living environments after their homes sustain flood damage.
 - **Safety, Support, & Security (S):** Identified severe operational gaps in emergency staffing activations. Specifically, council emergency expert Sue Newski was not deployed when needed because her direct supervisor was on maternity leave, leaving no active protocol to bypass the bottleneck and call her up.
 - **Transportation (T):** Noted that transportation barriers severely impacted the community's ability to flee during critical evacuation orders—a localized threat that occurred within a single block of the speaker's own home.
- **Regional Training Rollouts:** Findings from the report are directly informing the design of the upcoming community outreach and emergency management trainings scheduled for Yakima and Spokane.
- **Power Backup Pilot Program:** The Coalition for Inclusive Emergency Planning (CIEP) is moving forward with a testing pilot

project focused on electrical power backup systems for durable medical equipment.

Partner Updates

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation- Dana Phelps

- See report

Department of Services for the Blind- Tricia Eyerly

- The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) is finalizing an update to its state plan. Submission is briefly delayed to refine specific fiscal information, after which the updated plan will be posted and shared publicly.
- Working closely with the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to prepare the agency to move to an "order of selection" system within the next year due to resource constraints.
- This administrative shift will affect the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program but will **not** interrupt the independent living programs. Services for older and younger blind individuals will continue without requiring waitlists.
- DSB Executive Director Michael and DVR leadership recently attended the national consortium conference in Washington, D.C., participating in direct advocacy visits on The Hill.
- During a meeting with Senator Patty Murray's office, the team discovered one of the Senator's legislative aides was a former DSB vocational rehabilitation customer.

- Independent Living Program Manager Kim Canaan is collaborating with the Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC) to launch a specialized virtual instruction program in June.
 - The pilot will provide group-based virtual training for routine and easily described adaptive independent living skills, allowing DSB to reach more people simultaneously.
 - This virtual model was designed to chip away at persistent provider and trainer shortages that have caused service waitlists in King and Snohomish counties, with the ultimate goal of expanding access statewide.

Washington State Rehabilitation Council- Shelby Satko

- See report

Washington State Governors Council on Disabilities- Elizabeth Gordon

- Following a heavy legislative session, efforts shifted heavily toward long-term organizational capacity projects.
- The commission managed an unusually high number of openings this year, making recruitment a lengthy process. While many strong applicants were existing state employees, the group actively re-evaluated proposals to ensure the commission maintained a balanced community perspective without an overabundance of state staff.
- Because a high number of open seats left fewer members available to carry out project work, several initiatives fell slightly behind schedule.

- New members are expected to be fully seated and onboarded by mid-May, restoring the committee to full operational capacity.
- Despite initial uncertainty regarding funding availability, the group successfully awarded \$100,000 in Accessible Communities funds across four distinct proposals. Contracts with the respective counties are currently being finalized. These grass-roots, targeted grants pair local counties directly with people with disabilities to identify and repair critical localized infrastructure and access barriers.
- Impact Examples:
 - Outdoor Recreation: Funded specialized beach and trail-accessible wheelchairs to enhance park inclusion.
 - Community Spaces: Funded physical path improvements at a dog park, ensuring handlers with disabilities can navigate the space alongside their peers.
- The traditional six-day overnight youth camp is being phased out due to persistent volunteer staffing shortages and a lack of on-site personnel.
- The primary focus this year is shifting toward building a dedicated Youth Council to institutionalize direct "Youth Voice" within the commission's work.
- The council will partner closely with the legislative action youth committee (*acronym pending final verification*) to foster advocacy and self-advocacy skills.
- The committee intends to align with peer partners, with the goal of hosting a public listening session or an initial formal meeting by the end of the calendar year.

- Members are actively building out self-advocacy and legal literacy resources to support the community through volatile shifts in federal resource consistency. Plans include an informal training series featuring lived-experience storytelling and targeted inclusion fact sheets.
- The legislative subcommittee is reviewing its framework to shift from a reactive stance toward an early, values-based system. This will allow the committee to establish legislative priorities and multi-agency partnerships well ahead of the session, though members will maintain the flexibility to react to unexpected bills.
- Due to state travel freezes, the typical in-person rural community outreach events are being reimaged. The team is collaborating with accessible communities subcommittees to build highly targeted, virtual conversation spaces.
- Annual October Employer Awards on hiatus due to travel restrictions, efforts have shifted entirely toward sustainable economic advancement. The team published a *Know Your Rights* discrimination guide and is pivoting conversations away from entry-level positions toward securing higher-paying, career-track employment.
- A recently departing member is leading a targeted initiative to address evening and after-hours specialized transit shortages, removing a major employment barrier for shift workers and individuals who prefer or need night schedules.
- Long-term collaborative work on the Executive Order 24-05 steering committee has reached major launch milestones.

- The mandatory training module focused on *Creating a Welcoming Environment for People with Disabilities* has officially launched across state government. Rooted deeply in disability justice principles, the curriculum heavily featured the design input and review of advocates with lived experience.
- A second required module covering the structural rules of *Reasonable Accommodations* will launch within the next few weeks. This training will be an annual, repeatable requirement for all supervisors to reinforce that accommodations are a legal right rather than a special request.
- Broader partnership efforts—including the Office of Equity, Department of Services for the Blind (DSB), DVR, and the WSRC—are actively focusing on structural application and navigation reforms to make entering state employment significantly easier for candidates with disabilities.

CIL Updates

Mark Leeper, Executive Director, Disability Action Center (DAC)

- Mirroring the deep infrastructure gaps found in Northeastern Washington, Southeastern Washington counties face a persistent lack of reliable public transit.
- The Council on Aging and Human Services—which operated a robust regional transit service out of Colfax, Washington—recently collapsed due to a series of institutional misfortunes. The sudden closure completely dismantled regional transit networks, leaving the general

public, older adults, and individuals with disabilities completely stranded across Whitman and Garfield counties, as well as parts of North-Central Idaho.

- To prevent a total service vacuum, the center originally authorized a \$20,000 vehicle matching loan. Because the funds were ultimately not utilized for a vehicle match, the structure was shifted to a \$5,000 expenditure to purchase three specific, multi-passenger transit vehicles registered directly in Idaho.
- Following the service collapse, the center is working aggressively to reallocate these existing vehicles so they can be put back into rotation, helping cross-border and rural residents reach essential destinations.
- Requests for proposals (RFPs) have officially been distributed to identify a new transit provider willing to pick up and restart operations on the Idaho side of the border.
- Yakima-based transit provider People for People has officially expanded operations into the impacted Washington counties, using available funding to rebuild the lost routes as quickly as possible.
- The primary operational focus is restoring transit routes into the Spokane area, which serves as the region's central urban hub for critical medical appointments, specialized healthcare, and essential services.
- **Prohibitive Commercial Alternatives:** Restoring these subsidized community routes remains an urgent priority due to the exorbitant cost of private alternatives

Erin Farrier, Program Director, Disability Action Center North East (DAC NEW)

- Disability Action Center NW (DAC NW) serves a massive, predominantly rural territory spanning
- Outside of the Spokane Transit Authority (STA), the region lacks robust public transportation—especially heading north—making it incredibly difficult for rural residents to travel into the central hub to access vital services.
- Many northern communities completely lack reliable internet and cellular service. Combined with the shift toward online applications, this creates a massive barrier for individuals trying to secure basic state and federal assistance.
- Driven by an influx of community requests, DAC NW is building out a specialized wheelchair ramp program for the northeast corner of the state. The critical need for home access infrastructure spiked dramatically following regional wildfires, prompting calls from partners like the American Red Cross to help displaced residents safely return to family homes.
- Without a centralized regional medical equipment loan closet, the center operates as a vital resource bridge. Staff coordinate with local food banks, nonprofits, and agencies to track down and distribute essential gear, including:
 - Manual wheelchairs, mobility scooters, and specialized lifting beds.

- Low-cost or donated laptops, paired with direct staff navigation support so clients can successfully apply for online services like SSDI and food stamps.
- Utilizing the Roll20 digital platform, this thriving Saturday peer group serves as a powerful isolation-breaker for youth and individuals from St. Luke's Rehabilitation Medical Center who face barriers to attending in-person social gatherings.
- A highly secure, moderated Discord space for youth and young adults (ages 13–24) to share resources, ask questions, and chat safely. The platform utilizes a mandatory registration link to prevent unwanted guests and offer peace of mind to parents.
- **Accessible Fishing Peer Group:** Returning for the season as temperatures warm up, this group organizes outings to fully accessible fishing locations across the region, including expansion sites north of the STA boundary and into Moses Lake.
 - A partnership with Cabela's secured \$500 in donated fishing equipment, including adaptive gear for participants who cannot use traditional rods.
 - Thanks to a unique group license provided by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, participants can fish entirely for free without needing an individual license. This organizational waiver also allows members from DAC NW's Idaho offices to fish across the Washington border.
- Staff recently kicked off rural resource deployments with a successful turnout in Cusick—the headquarters of the Kalispel Tribe of Indians. Similar mobile community health events featuring pop-up clinics,

vaccines, food trucks, and a DSHS mobile unit will continue throughout the spring and summer.

- Partnering with the local Rotary Club for their inaugural trade show, DAC NW is featuring an interactive youth transition exercise called the **"Tree of Life"** to guide high school students transitioning out of school into pre-employment concepts:
 - **Roots:** Representing survival and foundational needs.
 - **Trunk:** Representing individual core values.
 - **Branches:** Representing career and personal goals.
 - **Leaves:** Representing personal wants and future aspirations.
- DAC NW will be hosting resource tables at the massive Steps for Autism event in Spokane on April 25th, alongside participation in local Disability Pride Week initiatives.
- **Save the Date: Annual Bridging Community Celebration**
 - Celebrating the 36th anniversary of the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - Taking over the fountain area, carousel, and the orange bridge spanning the river at Riverfront Park in Spokane.
 - A fully intersectional, multicultural experience featuring live performances, guest speeches, free food, a dedicated kids zone, and vendor booths lining both sides of the bridge.
- This year's event will debut a public wheelchair obstacle course near the carousel, designed to give the broader public a firsthand understanding of spatial barriers and the critical importance of universal design. Vendor applications will be distributed shortly.

Faith Brown, Executive Director, Center for Independence (CFI)

- Core independent living and systems advocacy efforts are increasingly restricted by skyrocketing regional housing costs, severe workforce capacity shortages, and stark service disparities between urban hubs and rural/tribal communities.
- The region is consciously shifting its focus toward systemic power building, giving individuals with disabilities the structural platforms, financial tools, and confidence to drive legislative change themselves.
- Over the past year, peer-driven advocacy teams conducted targeted legislative education briefings with three elected representatives, cementing the role of people with disabilities as trusted advisors in state policymaking.
- Breaking from the traditional model that restricts summer programming solely to contracted Centers for Independent Living (CIL/CFI) enrollees, this year's summer workshops are open to *all* area youth with disabilities.
- To directly support youth stepping into summer employment, specialized financial literacy sessions are scheduled for late May and early June.
- Systemic advocacy achieved a major milestone during the SILC lunch hour, where CFI served as an embedded editor and co-author for Tacoma Public Schools' Policy 3412, which establishes formalized educational and health accommodations for students with adrenal insufficiency.

- The center continues to provide systems-level technical assistance to one of Washington's largest school districts, holding a permanent seat on the Equity Policy Review Committee to directly shape policy revisions presented to the school board.
- Staff are partnering with the Washington State Historical Society to audit and co-develop frameworks that guarantee full representation, accessibility, and meaningful participation across Washington's public history and cultural facilities.
- Staff met directly with the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) ahead of incoming federal disaster resource openings.
- Partnerships are being deepened with regional immigrant rights organizations to identify, track, and protect individuals with disabilities navigating or facing high risks of detention or incarceration. The initiative centers on creating diversion strategies to prevent unnecessary institutionalization and secure missing legal, social, and medical accommodations.
- The center is actively facilitating infrastructure discussions to secure home energy resiliency systems for households with disabilities, aggressively targeting rural areas and tribal reservations where infrastructure reliability disparities are most dangerous during prolonged power grid failures.
- As part of the broader energy and housing resiliency push, staff are providing direct technical assistance to property owners and landlords on universal design and sustainable engineering, while continuing to

supply independent living advocacy directly to renters and leaseholders.

- In Q1 2026, the center was invited by U.S. Representative Rick Larsen's office to provide direct community input and expert guidance following a severe December weather disaster.
- Staff mobilized alongside the Washington Emergency Management Division's (EMD) Access and Functional Needs Manager to formally elevate the systemic barriers, localized hardships, and structural inequities experienced by disaster survivors with disabilities.
- The center submitted a comprehensive, community-informed formal response to the federal government, outlining explicit requests for targeted aid to fix the disproportionate impact of climate disasters on households with access and functional needs.
- The center launched a comprehensive, real-time outreach campaign contacting every participant within their registry database.
- The data explicitly tracks ongoing hardships and unmet regional needs, while simultaneously identifying and mapping the specific community partners, mutual aid groups, and local resources that successfully provided resilient support during crises.
- The center hosted an interactive Advocacy Day featuring peer-led speeches and structured systemic change exercises, collecting a library of lived-experience reflections to launch through the spring and summer.
- A structured storytelling and systems-change program was introduced, utilizing three progressive modules to safely amplify individual experiences:

- **Pure Light**
- **Spotlight**
- **Flashlight**
- **The Flashcard Prompt Exercise:** As a tactical tool within these modules, participants utilized reflective flashcards to bypass standard institutional narratives. Key prompts and powerful community insights included:
 - *"What is a question you wish somebody would ask you?"*
 - *"How do you learn best?"*
 - *"What is a question you wish people would stop asking you?"*
 - *"What is one thing you want somebody to know about you?"*
 - *"What small change made a big difference in your life?"* — To which one community member powerfully responded: *"Faith in my independence."*
- The Center for Independent Living has solidified agreements with regional Puget Sound transit authorities to dramatically expand structural mobility and regional connectivity.
- Universal transit cards have been officially allocated for all new and incoming center staff, guaranteeing seamless, cross-agency regional travel.
- **Inter-County Network Coverage:** This integration ensures full mobility across all major regional systems, explicitly including:
 - Pierce Transit
 - King County Metro
 - Community Transit (Snohomish County)
 - Sound Transit Link Light Rail

- The Center for Independent Living (CIL) successfully secured fully funded ORCA transit cards for all current employees, alongside dedicated card allocations for all incoming and new personnel.
- This benefit provides staff with unrestricted, fare-free mobility across the entire greater Puget Sound transportation grid, drastically improving the center's capacity to deliver localized, community-based services. The transit integration explicitly covers:
 - Pierce Transit
 - King County Metro
 - Community Transit (Snohomish County)
 - Sound Transit Link Light Rail and Sounder Commuter Rail
 - Kitsap Transit Foot Ferries, the Tacoma Link, and all regional public Vanpools
- The center is in active partnership negotiations with Amtrak to serve as an official regional tester for their brand-new, universally accessible railcar launching in Summer 2026. Peer advocates with lived experience will directly evaluate and refine the car's layout to shape the future of accessible intercity rail travel.
- In alignment with the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), the center officially closed its northern satellite office in Marysville on May 31st.
- While evaluating real estate for a more centralized permanent northern hub, the organization is beta-testing a distributed, fully remote workforce model across the North Sound. This setup minimizes static overhead while expanding real-time geographic adaptability and consumer outreach.

- To facilitate fluid hybrid and community-based service delivery, the organization is systematically converting to a 100% paperless operational model, maximizing long-term efficiency, document accessibility, and scalability.
- Over the past five months, leadership systematically overhauled all internal organizational policies and procedures to strengthen compliance and structural clarity.
- The center successfully migrated to a high-capacity database system to elevate data integrity and reporting metrics, while simultaneously onboarding new professional fiscal partners specializing in advanced nonprofit accounting, bookkeeping, and audit assurance.
- Human resources is executing a comprehensive review and update of all organizational job descriptions to accurately reflect evolving roles and support data-backed, equitable wage adjustments across all departments.
- Current recruitment and workforce development efforts are heavily focused on building a diverse, mission-driven team while actively embedding a sustainable corporate culture that protects employee work-life balance.
- Reflecting an absolute commitment to equity and lived experience, the organization's executive leadership team is entirely comprised of **(100%)** Black and Brown women with disabilities.
- The center is actively recruiting new governing board members who directly mirror the community and share a unified vision for systemic disability justice, community-led intersectionality, and aggressive systems change.

Mayra Colazo, Executive Director, Central Washington Disability Resources (CWDR)

- The Yakima office has hired two new bilingual staff members—one dedicated entirely to systems advocacy and the other serving as a part-time Independent Living (IL) specialist.
- Backed by vital foundational grant support, the organization has scaled its capacity from a baseline of just 4 employees up to a team of **12 staff members**, dramatically increasing direct service delivery across Central Washington.
- Direct service staff currently maintain intense active caseloads averaging **30 to 50 consumers per person** (with some individual staff carrying even more). The newly added positions are strategically structured to provide caseload relief and cross-coverage support.
- The center has restructured its youth initiatives into comprehensive, age-specific brackets to ensure full, continuous support across all developmental stages:
 - **Ages 2–5 (Assistive Technology Playgroups):** Located in Yakima, this brand-new bracket features specialized support groups where parents and children connect over adaptive, AT-engineered toys to foster early childhood disability milestones.
 - **Grades K–5 (Disability Awareness):** Focuses on peer inclusion, foundational disability education, and interactive outdoor recreational activities.
 - **Grades 6–8 (Pre-Employment Explorations):** Blends accessible outdoor recreation—such as hiking and fishing—

with early, age-appropriate introductions to workplace and career concepts.

- **Grades 9–12 (Hands-On Transition Readiness):** Focuses on tactical pre-employment skills, including direct resume building, tracking down local volunteer opportunities, and mapping out community internship options.
- **Ages 18+ (Adult Autonomy):** Independent living groups tailored strictly to adult transition, continuing education, and career retention.
- **ESD 105 Summer Workshop:** The center is partnering directly with Educational Service District 105 (ESD 105) to deliver this year's Summer Youth Transition Workshop, with the long-term goal of securing the primary contract next year to scale operations further.
- **Popular Virtual ASL Club:** The center's highly popular American Sign Language club continues to run successfully online, providing structured lessons on vocabulary, sentence construction, and weekly home practice.
- Launching next week in both Yakima and Ellensburg, this specialized 12-week curriculum is designed for individuals with developmental disabilities. Cohorts meet weekly to build practical skills in hygiene, nutritional habits, and adaptive outdoor activities.
- Plans are underway to expand the center's popular accessible pool pass program directly into Yakima
- The center's dedicated VA program continues to see a steady influx of new service referrals. Staff are cross-training additional team

members to expand the program's footprint deeper into the Yakima and Tri-Cities areas.

- Building on successful basic computer classes, staff are expanding outreach directly into local assisted living facilities and community living centers to deliver on-site digital literacy training.
- Launching the Advocacy Club: Led by the new systems advocacy staff, this club actively trains community members to navigate municipal government.
- Advocacy teams are launching targeted physical audits of local sidewalks and bus stops, generating data to force municipal prioritization of ADA compliance and universal design, while continuing to spearhead regional emergency preparedness panels.
- The center is hosting its annual neighborhood cleanup event next week, inviting volunteers and community members to give back through localized environmental stewardship.
- Staff are tracking and responding to an intersectional spike in health disparities, mental health strain, and severe isolation within Central Washington's immigrant communities, actively building trust and safety resources for individuals hesitant to navigate public spaces.
- Leadership maintains a heavy footprint on key state-level bodies, including the Governor's licensing subcommittee, Department of Health advisory panels, and a collaborative charter mapping out how community organizations report back to the Secretary of State.
- Preliminary planning has begun for a major fundraising gala tentatively scheduled for May 2027, intentionally timed to accommodate traveling West-side partners.

Kimberly Meck, Executive Director, Disability Empowerment Center (DEC)

- The center's specialized youth group program is currently active across eight different local schools. The initiative is 100% on track to fully expend its existing contract allocation, establishing a strong foundation to request increased funding next year.
- Training is officially underway to secure final provider approval for the VDC program.
- A veteran on the center's staff has officially been promoted into the dedicated VDC Program Coordinator role to lead the rollout.
- In response to renewed staff interest, the center is preparing to restart its certified HCL curriculum, deploying pre-trained team facilitators to lead the community wellness classes.
- The King County Disability Consortium continues to meet systematically on the third Tuesday of every month to coordinate local equity strategies.
- The upcoming session features King County Elections officials outlining steps to establish official accessible voting locations. The briefing will clarify legal parameters surrounding ballot collection:
 - **Legal Ballot Dropping:** Staff confirmed it is completely legal under Washington state law for a trusted individual to drop off another person's ballot.
 - **CIL Drop Boxes:** Because ballot handling is legal when built on mutual trust, independent living centers can legally act as coordinated ballot collection sites to transport materials to county drop boxes before election deadlines.

- Elections officials will also brief the consortium on potential operational impacts to King County's mail-in voting processes depending on pending Supreme Court rulings regarding ballot-counting windows.
- The *Understanding Ableism* presentation series continues to stream on the fourth Tuesday of every month from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM. Recent sessions covered:
 - Accessible travel frameworks
 - Highlighting the work of disabled artists
 - Navigating different historical and medical models of disability
- The designated focus topic features comprehensive emergency preparedness. The program is being successfully run by two center interns, one of whom has built a comprehensive four-part Emergency Prep video series now live on the center's YouTube channel.
- Cross-agency teams are designing a specialized curriculum for Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) counselors to deeply educate them on the structural definition, scope, and legal rights behind independent living services.
- King County staff are launching an in-person "road trip" to visit every local DVR branch office.
- The center is entering a quarterly partnership with Bridge Ministries in Redmond. Will co-host community events that maximize geographic coverage without duplicating services.
- Following a successful engagement last year, Seattle's fully accessible, disability-led *Sound Theatre Company* has reinvited the center to host a post-show audience "talkback" discussion. The event

will take place after a live performance of the Jazz-age production, *The Wild Party*.

- Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP) meeting, officials announced that the Washington Talking Book & Braille Library (WTBBL) will officially reopen.
- After initially being forced to close due to severe state budget cuts, emergency funding was successfully secured to restore operations.
- The library is currently hiring two new staff members to manage the space. While it will initially operate on modified, part-time hours, the reopening restores an invaluable statewide pipeline of physical braille, audio, and large-print literacy materials for blind and visually impaired Washingtonians.

History of the Independent Living Movement in Washington – Mark Leeper

- See presentation

Group Exercise – Courtney Williams

“What will you do to move the independent living movement forward to make sure the voices of people with disabilities are heard and respected in Washington?”

Courtney: Again, I told you I was immersed in the developmental disability world and advocating for that community. This is another community that includes everybody in the disability realm. Sometimes I forget I am someone with lived experience. I am dyslexic, I have bipolar disorder. I forget I am this person in this community representing a community and I have not done my part. The other part of that, this -- I am dyslexic and I

haven't slept so you will see I get lost in my thoughts and words and I can't articulate. It impacts so many things we don't think of. Depth perception, I am not just clumsy, it is my dyslexia. I have been learning more and as I am hearing legislation, policies being proposed, I see a lot of exclusion with our Deaf and Hard of Hearing and blank unity. I have been looking at data of these communities that have shown devastating realities in these community spaces. We don't bring it up enough so as we are moving forward in the work with our SPIL and strategic plan and outreach and community building, we are going to be doing within WASILC, I am committed to being more inclusive. We have to be. These voices haven't been at the table, the presence of these communities have not been at the table and we need to be more upfront and clear they have a role so that is what I am going to do and what I am committed to doing.

Dion: A lot of things come to my head. I am going to go with the one that stands out the most. I have been involved in transit related discussions throughout my 36 years of transit related, those discussions as a driver, supervisor, manager, administrator, project manager throughout my whole career. I have been having pretty much the same issues when it came to challenges involving hours with disabilities and for so long, I believe it's because when those issues arrive at agency, the infrastructure is never prepared to not only hear but to take action towards amending whatever the issues are. So I think as time has gone by these issues have come up over and over that it is becoming quite loud. But the challenge is always who is the person or group that is going to take action? So issues often come in but they said it and people want to do stuff but the turnover within organizations really restrict any

movement. So my goal, first of all, not having a CIL in Vancouver or Southwest Washington is a crime. And I believe that had we had a CIL in the 90s, we probably did because Mark said we did, something happened. We lost momentum, huge. So one of my commitments is to work on getting a CIL here, putting the right people that want to communicate and contact with those that need to communicate with them.

FAITH: Okay, thank you so much. This is a great question and prompt. I appreciate Mark for emphasizing we are advocates. One of my key takeaways from some of my earlier trainings in IL was Ed Roberts saying the most important service a CIL can provide is advocacy. I am proud to be an advocate and activist in our movement to bring independent living as an inherent and automatically known system and program but how we will be able to do it is continue to educate and celebrate our communities. So our community members can safely identify and safely coordinate in community so there needs can be better amplified and heard. One of the gaps we recognize here socially and in our region, the lack of spaces to be able to coordinate community. Either through physical and accessibility, we need outreach efforts that need to increase to ensure we are reaching our underserved, underrepresented populations. Our mechanism for supporting this is celebration. In order for us to feel safe in our identities and feel connected in our community's celebration and celebrating our differences and existence is a key and critical component to supporting our community. I know as an individual with a disability that I struggle to find safe spaces for disclosure. And therefore for support and connection, that is a shadow period of our work that we are directly addressing through representation, direct

recruitment, through bravely creating pathways for partnerships and stakeholders to come through into our movement in LA ship. I really appreciate the message about the external systemic voice. Those are our allies. I am really big on organizing allyship for communities, increased movement and support. I think we are in good company and it's exciting to be one of the newer members in these meetings as a new ED, it is exciting to be able to have this opportunity, our critical strategy is liberating resources. In order for power to be redistributed we need to liberate resources and remove the barriers of access to these resources. We work very hard to liberate these resources, make sure our federal funds, services, our people, our meeting our people where they are at. We are dedicated to that and we are centering it on education and celebration.

ERIN: This is Erin, thank you for asking this question. I had to think about it for a moment. When I think about moving forward with independent living movement I think about stories. As something we are big up here is promoting stories. We are a small office, four of us here, we have a large area to cover. I drive all over the place all the time trying to connect with people. As a small office our voices are tiny. But when we get more people involved and have that focused area of telling our story, it is so much more powerful and making effective change. An example of this was 14 of us got together and we decided to share our Medicaid stories to our representative and it was a powerful experience, families, professionals, people who traveled like my son and I, I live an hour and 1/2 away from his office. We joined together and took over the office and shared our stories. It wasn't lobbying, it was simply this is our life, this is why Medicaid is so important. It's these stories that make a difference.

Even before I joined the disability action center it was well known in the northeast corner of the state people feel cut off from the west side. There is a cultural divide, distances, it takes and the entire day to get to Olympia if I was going to meet with any representative. Just a lack of services, we live in an historically underserved area. We have the Spokane, Kalispell tribes here, one of the major factors in being cut off is the lack of infrastructure. The Internet. Sul service. There is huge gaps and people in this day and age are connected through virtual needs, like in this meeting today we are privileged to be able to connect across the state. But if I was anywhere north or on one of the reservations around me, I am lucky enough to be by a hub that allows me to have Internet. Along Highway 395 there are huge gaps getting between where I am to Spokane. So it's worse if you travel further away from 395, our only main thoroughfare to get anywhere. Trying to bring these stories to make that effective change is a huge challenge. Advocacy days, I love the idea. I am involved with the advocacy days every year. I can't make it over to Olympia when they do their in-person times. That is a 12-hour trip for me. That is a huge barrier for other folks around here. Again, that adds to feeling cut off. Voices silenced. So finding a way to get these stories out is one of my goals. The disability action center here is highly focused in system work. I posted the list that we were involved in the packet. You can see everything we are involved in across the region. We bring ourselves to the table to make sure the disability voice is heard. We encourage our consumers to join us. We need to make our voices louder so that has been our goal is the disability voice to be louder and heard and get those stories out so people know what it is like for folks, especially here where we feel rather cut off. That is my two cents on that.

Tony: I just wanted to say what I will do to keep making voices heard is I will continue to fight and continue to stress accessibility because I often find with my disability that it is the last to be thought about a lot of times. So it's difficult with me and I know it is difficult for other blind and low vision folks going to meetings or somewhere that things aren't accessible. I was on the website yesterday, a government website as a matter of fact. Not accessible, can't get past the account stage. The accessibility they say they have doesn't work. So my contribution is to continue doing what I am doing and continue to fight and educate [Audio Issues] and just be present to make sure it is heard and accessibility is important and the only way to move forward is to make everything accessible for everyone. That is it.

Mark: My first thing I'm going to do is continue to hire people [Audio Issues] hiring people [Audio Issues] is awesome. One of the awesome things I am working on and will continue to work on, I will continue working for a while. I want -- we have a large population of indigenous people in the state. Often the whole term independent living is a turnoff. We worked on that for years and that goes back to relationships so I want to continue building the relationships and making independent living real for all communities. That is why I mentioned the indigenous interdependence thing that will be coming out and has been something we have been espousing. That is a real push we will continue to make. On reservation lands and underserved communities to try to develop leadership.

Jim: physical barriers are easy to fix. Communication barriers, not that easy but most of the technology is already here. Just need to package it right.

Adjourn 3:30 pm