



Independent Living Supports

On September 15, 2020, Transition Tennessee hosted a virtual transition fair on Independent Living Supports for people with disabilities in Tennessee. We heard from representatives from the Statewide Independent Living Council, Our Place Nashville, the Memphis Center for Independent Living, the Jackson Center for Independent Living, the TARP Center for Independent Living, Empower Tennessee, the disABILITY Resource Center, and Brother's Keeper. We also heard from a panel of young adults with disabilities about their experiences living independently. This document summarizes information from each presentation.

Independent Living in Tennessee

Independence looks different for each one of us. Independence means living, working, and enjoying life. Relationships with families and friends, work, interests and hobbies, health, money, food, and transportation are all aspects of independent living. There are several agencies across the state that can help people with disabilities strengthen their independent living skills.

What are Centers for Independent Living?

- Agencies that are:
 - Private non-profits
 - Designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities
 - Non-residential
- Services Provided:
 - Advocacy
 - Skills training
 - Peer support
 - Information and referrals
 - Transition services

What is the Statewide Council for Independent Living?

- An independent nonprofit governed by people with disabilities
- Mission: To advance advocacy and independence for Tennesseans with disabilities by collaborating with all interested parties
- The council believes people with disabilities know their needs best.



Our Place Nashville

About Our Place

- Affordable housing model in Nashville
- Individuals with and without disabilities live together
- Funded through grants, donors, and community partners
- Serve adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities over age 21

Residential Models

- Friendship Houses
 - Individuals with developmental and/or intellectual disabilities live with Vanderbilt graduate students. They have two different types of friendship houses.
 - Type 1: One apartment building with four 2-bedroom units and four 1-bedroom units
 - Type 2: Two apartment buildings with ten 1-bedroom apartments. This model includes a large community building with a gathering space, laundry room, and mailboxes, and the community is gated.
- Our Place Shared Living House
 - Three-story duplex with ten 1-bedroom units
 - Shared kitchen/dining area, laundry, and deck
- Future Models
 - Three-story apartment building with third floor just for Our Place Nashville to house 14 residents of different abilities and careers
 - Community of 12 tiny homes housing both individuals with disabilities and friends without disabilities

Other Services

- Weekly services: Communal dinners, life skills classes, book club, movie nights, and journaling sessions
- Training activities, arts workshops, job placement, bi-annual community-wide meetings, monthly parents' group, and seasonal parties

Memphis Center for Independent Living (MCIL)

About MCIL

- Mission: To facilitate the full integration of persons with disabilities into all aspects of community life
- Location: Memphis, TN
- Cross-disability non-profit that services individuals in Shelby, Tipton, and Fayette counties
- More than 51% of staff and board are people with disabilities
- All services are free and consumer-driven

MCIL Services

- Information and Referral
 - Gather information about the client to refer them to community services or organizations that best fit their needs and interests



- Advocacy
 - Self: Empower individuals to be an active participant in their own lives by requesting accommodations for housing, education, employment, and more
 - Community: Engage clients and community members to work for the disability community by advocating for law reform and attending advocacy events
- Independent Living Skills
 - Classes teaching how to read braille
 - Trainings for peer-to-peer mentoring
 - Workshops for budgeting, couponing, and relationships
- Peer Support
 - Peer Outreach Program: A cross-disability social group that focuses on living a healthy lifestyle that meets quarterly
 - LIFE Group: A young adult cross-disability peer support group that meets virtually every Thursday
- Transition
 - Work with students ages 14-22
 - Attend and plan student IEP meetings
 - Put together a community resources toolkit
 - Educate parents about resources and rights

Jackson Center for Independent Living (JCIL)

About JCIL

- A community-based, nonresidential, consumer-controlled program of services designed to enable persons with disabilities to achieve maximum independence and fully participate in all aspects of community life
- Location: Jackson, TN
- Serves Madison, Crockett, Gibson, Carroll, Henderson, Chester, Hardin, and Haywood counties

Services

- Information and Referral, Skills Training, Advocacy, Peer Counseling and Support, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Modifications, Equipment Program, and Family Support Program
- Individuals who live in Jackson can take public transportation to get to the JCIL building.

Success Stories of Past Participants

- Attending college
- Working
- Living independently or with supports
- Attending graduate school



TARP Center for Independent Living

About TARP

- Mission: To provide cross-disability services to promote active citizenship and create services that support self-determination and full participation in community life
- Location: Paris, TN
- Serves Benton, Dickson, Henry, Houston, Humphreys, Montgomery, Stewart, and Weakly counties

Independent Living Skills Training

- Work with students at school to strengthen independent living skills
- Empower consumers with knowledge to perform daily tasks essential for establishing and maintaining independence
- Cover topics such as budgeting, resume writing, interviews, vocational skills, personal care, cooking, navigating social services, problem-solving, understanding reasonable accommodations, assistive technologies, and personal safety

Advocacy

- Work with parents to help young adults with disabilities to advocate for rights, accommodations, and plans for when their child turns 18 years old

Partnerships

- Work closely with VR, ECF Choices, and the Department of Social Security

Empower Tennessee

About Empower Tennessee

- Location: Nashville, Tennessee
- Primarily serves Cheatham, Davidson, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties but can serve other Middle Tennessee counties too
- Serves anyone who identifies as having any kind of disability, has personal goals, and is ready to achieve these goals

Goal

- Empowering people with disabilities with the resources and support needed to meet individual goals
- Empower Tennessee wants to hear the individual's voice and their own goals to help them achieve what they want to achieve.

How to Empower Students

- Goal planning
- Resource identification
- College and/or employment readiness
- Ongoing support



disABILITY Resource Center (dRC)

About dRC

- Mission Statement: dRC will provide services, support, and advocacy to people with disabilities, empowering them to live independently and actively participate in their communities.
- Location: West Knox County, TN
- Serves Knox, Blount, and Sevier counties
- Serves anyone with a physical, mental, intellectual, and/or developmental disability of any age
- Collaborate with local agencies to maximize available resources

What can dRC do?

- Connect individuals to resources they need or provide them with training for more independence
- Provide an environment and mentors for individuals to connect with other people who have similar experience, barriers, and skills
- Provide an array of independent living services

Independent Living Philosophy

- Every person, regardless of ability level, has the potential and right to exercise individual self-determination.
- “All services are our client’s choices, not our choices.”

dRC Services

- Youth Transition
 - Prepare young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences to help them gain skills and competencies
- Information and Referral
 - Provide resources and connections in the community, answer questions, and make referrals to other agencies who may have more specific services
- Advocacy
 - Individual: Help individuals participate in their own self-advocacy and support their own rights
 - Youth: Just began a partnership with UT’s Youth Advocacy Group for students interested in disability rights
 - Systems: Assist in creating reforms for changes in the system that will increase equality and inclusion for the disability community
- Independent Living Skills Training
 - Services that develop, maintain, and improve community living skills
 - Examples: Cooking, cleaning, budgeting, emergency preparedness, transportation, and employment
 - One-on-one virtual services for youth that help them identify and work on transition-related independent living skills



- Peer Support
 - Peer mentors meet with clients to discuss how they are adapting to a disability or working to increase their independence.
 - Mentors can utilize own experience to empower others to reach their independent living goals.
 - Support can be one-on-one or provided through group activities.
 - dRC is starting a virtual peer support for high school and college-age students in light of the current pandemic. They even have some Chromebooks to loan out for free.

Past clients have...

- Found employment
- Gotten connected with disability services at their college
- Prepared for transition out of their parents' home
- Increased their circle of support
- Gained experience volunteering

Brother's Keeper

About Brother's Keeper

- Year-round, faith-based, educational, and enrichment program designed to empower and engage individuals with disabilities within the community
- Privately funded
- Located in Johnson City, TN
- Serves the Tri-City region
- Designed for individuals after they transition out of high school
- Participants must be able to be physically active on their own.

Services

- Offer group programs that cover topics such as academics, wellness, spiritual growth, vocational skills, social skills, life skills, and finances
- Engage with the community through outings, tours, community events, and service projects
- Provide social activities such as book club, gardening, cooking, planning for meals, and hiking trips
- Job Skills Training: Have own enterprise where participants make their own goods and sell within the community and on Etsy

Future Plans

- To have own campus one day to house physical activities, residential areas, and living areas

Young Adult Panel

We hosted a live panel with three young adults with disabilities that are living independently. Below we have provided a general summary of each participant's answer to each question.



Demographic Information

- Panelist 1 lives in a condo with her best friend from kindergarten. She's been living with a roommate for 9 years.
- Panelist 2 lives in a one-story apartment through Our Place and has lived there since June.
- Panelist 3 lives in an apartment with a roommate he met in college and has been living there for about 2 months.

Question 1: How did you find your housing?

- 1: My parents found it. I asked my roommate about it, and our parents looked at it together and got it.
- 2: I found it from Our Place!
- 3: I was at my mom's house, and I got a text from friend who said he was needing another roommate. It was perfect timing.

Question 2: Do you manage your own healthcare?

- 1: My parents manage my healthcare for me.
- 2: I manage my own healthcare, and I get it from Vanderbilt.
- 3: My parents help me manage my own healthcare.

Question 3: How do you prepare your food?

- 1: I prepare my own vegetables. I'm on a specific meal plan, and then my roommate and I have girls' nights on the weekends where we order food.
- 2: I prepare my own food for lunch, but I do go out to eat sometimes too.
- 3: I cook four nights a week, and then one night, which is usually on the weekend, my roommate and I get takeout. Otherwise we'll have leftovers. When we go to work, we make sandwiches.

Question 4: What types of transportation do you guys use to get around your community?

- 1: I either walk, or my parents pick me up. Sometimes I take a car service called Access Ride on Demand, which is helpful.
- 2: I drive my own car.
- 3: I drive to my job, and then my roommate walks. If it's raining, I drive him.

Question 5: How did you know you were ready to live on your own?

- 1: I was in my early 20s when I wanted to move out. I talked about it with my parents and made the plans.
- 2: I just thought I was ready to move out of my parents' house.
- 3: I knew it was time, but I just didn't know exactly when. The night I got the text from my roommate I got so excited and thought it was a sign telling me it was time to move out.



Question 6: What is your favorite part of living on your own?

- 1: For me, it's just being independent and having my own place to live rather than at my parents' house.
- 2: Being independent and being able to be responsible
- 3: Being able to have my own freedom and take care of my own responsibilities

Question 7: Who helps you?

- 1: I get help from my parents for transportation.
- 2: My mom helps me sometimes with my money, but other than that I'm on my own.
- 3: When it comes to dealing with household items like the dishwasher or water heater going out, I've resorted to asking my parents for problems. But otherwise, I'm capable of managing a household on my own because I've seen my parents do it, and I've taken after them.

Question 8: Do you guys have any challenges living on your own? How have you overcome those challenges?

- 1: For me, having a disagreement with my roommate can be a challenge. Whenever we disagree, we talk it out.
- 2: I don't really have any.
- 3: The answer I just gave is exactly this: the same thing with household items messing up.

Question 9: What advice would you give to people who want to live on their own? What should they do now to prepare?

- 1: I would suggest practicing making grocery lists, going to the grocery store to purchase food, and maybe doing your laundry and sorting your clothes. Those are some things that you need to know how to do when you move out.
- 2: I would say making a grocery list and also being able to cook and practicing finances.
- 3: Start trying to stay home when your parents go out of town so you can start to get acclimated to staying by yourself. Get to feel what it feels like to be alone and what it feels like to have a roommate with you. Also make sure to have a good grasp on your money skills because renting and bills are a huge part of living on your own. I've encountered situations already where I've had to fix things, and my mom and dad tell me to try to fix it first. If I can't, they'll jump in, but otherwise it's on me for the most part. And also figure out the place where you would want to live in terms of location and who would be the best fit for the type of person you would want to live with. Living with someone you know is good, but sometimes living with someone you don't know is where the issues can come in. Living with someone is challenging, and you have to figure each other out. And remember that if it's not good, you only signed a one-year lease and not your life away.



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