

DISABILITY & RURAL COMMUNITIES



**MAKING A DIFFERENCE
IN SMALL TOWNS**



a project produced by the
National Youth Leadership Network
and the Center for Rural Strategies

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FOREWORD

by Elesia Ashkenazy

The National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is excited to have collaborated with our rural partners on this cutting-edge training guide for people with disabilities who live in rural areas.

The foundation of NYLN is built upon providing support and services to youth with disabilities. We are run by and for self-advocates, and our mission leads us to educate and empower youth and their communities.

Fulfilling and productive lives are a human right. There should be no barriers for people with disabilities when it comes to achieving personal goals and pursuing dreams.

This training guide aims to take readers on a journey of the importance of rural life and the inclusion of people with disabilities. This project was written by a self-advocate, and is tempered with advice, imagery, and personal stories. In the following pages, readers will learn about the appeal and beauty of rural life, differing views of disability, common needs, resources, advocacy, access issues, and inclusion. At the end of this project, an interactive activity brings the learning full circle and cements the ideas presented in this training guide.



IMAGE: A child props up a sign that reads DISABILITY RIGHTS = HUMAN RIGHTS.

We have high hopes that this resource will find its way to many rural communities around the United States and its territories. We hope these tools will be useful for helping people with disabilities in rural communities enhance their life experiences. We wish we could travel to and visit with each community this resource finds its way to. In the

meantime, we encourage you to visit our website and connect with us via questions, comments, and stories at <http://www.nyl.n.org>.

We appreciate your support and leave you with this quote by a leader of the international disability rights movement, Justin Dart:

I call for solidarity among all who love justice, all who love life, to create a revolution that will empower every single human being to govern his or her life, to govern the society and to be fully productive of life quality for self and for all. I'm with you always. Lead on! Lead on!



IMAGE: A photo of a big blue sky filled with puffy clouds. Beneath the sky are fields and farms.

INTRODUCTION

People with disabilities are a rich part of the rural fabric of America.

Yet many people ask why a person or a family would remain in a rural community when faced with considerable hardships such as lack of Internet access, lack of reliable transportation, or lack of needed supports and services. Why is rural America so important to those that live there anyway? Why not just move if things are so hard? Those are the easy questions to answer. A question that is not always so easy, however, is how people with disabilities can create or obtain services, as well as be included in their rural communities.

This training guide will focus on the importance of advocacy, inclusion, interdependence, networking and community involvement, leadership, resources, supports, and other relevant topics.

We suggest a minimum of 3.5 hours to study the material presented, and about an hour to implement the end-day “capstone” activity. Facilitators can choose to teach this guide over one day, or to break it into a two-day learning experience.





We intend this guide to be a helpful training resource for people with disabilities in rural areas. Given that this project is intended as a mini-training guide, we understand that there is a lot more to be covered in-depth when it comes to issues people with disabilities face in rural areas. Through sharing our basic ideas and resources, we wish to do our part to keep this important conversation going, as well as to assist in connecting people and resources to each other.



IMAGE: A photo of a pile of red and blue paperclips.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

At the start of each section, the items listed below will immediately follow the title:

	Time allotted: The number placed here equals the suggested amount of time to spend on the section.
	Goals: The goals listed here will describe the purpose of the section.
	Topics discussed: The topics listed here will cover what readers can expect to learn.
	Terms: The words listed here will be seen again in the section text. The definitions provided will help readers to better understand the text.

Before leading a training with this material, we encourage the facilitator to study the training guide and get all questions answered beforehand. National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN) is able to answer questions about this training guide. Simply look up our website at <http://www.nyln.org> and send us an email or give us a call.

Again, this guidebook can be taught over a **one-day** or a **two-day period**. The advantage of a two-day period is having more time to cover the material in depth. It also allows time for participants to have some downtime between sections, which allows for more time to reflect on the material. NYLN is able to give tips on how to best lead this training based on your unique situation, and how many people will be attending. Again, consult our website and send us an email or give us a call. We're happy to help!



IMAGE: A photo of the rings inside a three-ring binder.

Each participant attending the training should be given a copy of this training guide. We suggest making binders containing the guide for each participant. The facilitator will then read each section with participants (perhaps even sharing the task with interested participants in the room by taking reading turns so that the lesson then becomes interactive). We suggest letting participants know that they can interrupt at any time if things are moving too fast, or if they do not understand something. The facilitator can then adjust the reading pace accordingly or answer questions.

At the end of each section, questions to review with participants will be listed. The facilitator may ask the questions one-by-one to begin a group discussion about the material just read. We recommend supplying participants with pen and paper at the start of the training so that they can write down questions or comments they might think of while each section is being reviewed.

After all sections have been read, there will be a group activity. The activity is intended to enhance thinking and to create space for further

comments, learning, interaction, and group connection.

Most importantly, we strongly recommend having experienced and/or knowledgeable self-advocates (people with disabilities) lead and teach this training guide to each other. We support self-empowerment and self-direction for people with disabilities. And it is extremely important for people with disabilities to be given opportunities to lead within their communities, as well as to be taken seriously and given active roles of leadership and participation.

Non-disabled people, however, could most certainly be involved in the training—even as co-leaders—as long as they work in respectful collaboration with self-advocates and disability rights leaders.

FURTHER NOTES AND TIPS

- Time allotments are suggestions only. Use your judgment, based on your group's needs, and make necessary adjustments.
- Review aloud with participants the **Time allotted**, **Goals**, **Topics discussed**, and **Terms** for each section of the guide before reading the text that follows. You might even want to read over the Questions that will follow the section text, before beginning.
- We suggest prewriting all of the vocabulary terms on large sheets of paper and having them ready to hang or tape in view. Another option is to write out all terms/definitions on a white board/chalk board. Alternative formats should also be considered. This includes formats such as Braille, audio description, American Sign Language (ASL), etc. Asking participants what accommodations



IMAGE: Terms written on post-its.

they require—before holding a training—is a good way to learn of any possible needs for alternative formats.

- Consider the accommodation needs of the participants before holding a training. For example, do you need a room with natural lighting so as to accommodate people with sensitivities to artificial or fluorescent light? Do you need to arrange to have American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters for deaf or hard-of-hearing participants? Are your materials in large enough print for participants who require visual accommodations?
- Copies of the training guide, binders, and materials for the end-day “capstone” activity require a small amount of money to cover (dependent upon how many participants you expect to attend). A fundraiser or even the smallest grant can help to cover costs, which we have designed to be minimal. There’s also the option of charging participants a reasonable fee of \$5 per person to help offset costs though we advise against turning anyone away who is unable to pay. Some facilitators might be able to get a store to donate art supplies, and a business with a copy machine to donate paper and printing.




PART ONE

why people enjoy and want to live in rural areas



IMAGE: A photo of a calm river, taken from along the riverbank.

WHY PEOPLE ENJOY AND WANT TO LIVE IN RURAL AREAS

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The first goal of this section is to share a few stories from self-advocates who live, or have lived, in rural areas. The second goal is to highlight why self-advocacy and interdependence (being dependent upon one another) are especially important in rural areas.
	Topics discussed: The appeal of rural areas and what rural areas can offer people with disabilities.

TERMS

Associate's degree: A degree earned after a two-year course of study, usually from a community or a junior college.

Independent living: Advocacy by and for persons with all types of disabilities that supports self-determined life decisions.

Independent Living Centers (ILC's) help people with disabilities to be fully participatory members of their communities.

Interdependence: Two or more people or things being dependent upon each other, with neither person overpowering the other.

Self-determination: The process of controlling your own life.

Sensory sensitivity: Having high or low sensitivity (awareness and/or reaction) to what we see, feel, hear, or touch.

Vocational Rehabilitation: A state-by-state program that helps people with disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs.

LESSON

Laura Nagle, a woman on the autism spectrum, who also stars in the film *Vectors of Autism*, shares her valuable life experience with schools, businesses, families, and individuals. She loves rural living and states that there are a lot of reasons people enjoy and want to live in rural areas. She also feels that many sorts of communities are good for people with disabilities. For example, some of us like large cities for their conveniences—such as not having to own or drive a car. And some of us like small towns for their nearness of things—depending on how the town is designed of course.

Individuals with **sensory sensitivities** often appreciate the quietness of small towns. Large cities can have so much going on that the noise and light and confusion can overload one's sensory system (what they see, hear, feel, and touch around them).

Laura also mentioned the importance of a positive community experience. For example, she lives in Cornville, Arizona and loves it. She feels that people with disabilities can be much more successful when they live in communities that accommodate and include them without making a big fuss. Laura also noted that there are communities out there that embrace people with disabilities, and that in changing social environments, people with disabilities can live with much more acceptance and peace, as well as even experience greater ease of life. A change in social environment can happen in both large and small towns. However, some find change easier to accomplish in a small town atmosphere.

Elesia Ashkenazy, an adult on the autism spectrum who is also deaf, spent time as a child in rural areas and would like to share this story with readers:

When I was a young girl, I lived in a rural area called Banks, Oregon for a few years. The forestry is gorgeous, and beautiful farmland is plentiful. I have wonderful memories of running and playing in the wheat fields that surrounded our home, as well as the forest that bordered our property. I used to play in our neighbor's barn, swing from a tire my father had hung from a tree, and search the little creek in the forest for animals to study and play with. Banks was a community where people depended upon each other, as well as traded services. For example, my mother, an excellent seamstress (a woman who sews), taught sewing skills to a lady who owned a farm and had several children. In return, this lady babysat me in the mornings before school. She also watched me after school. The apple orchards, fresh honey, baby cows, and lots of other things her farm had to offer provided hours of entertainment for her kids and me. In Banks, everyone knew (or knew of) each other, and we all worked as best as we could to make a warm community that was inclusive and helpful.

My last experience living in a rural area was when I attended junior college in Tillamook, Oregon. My parents had built a house in a nearby town called Oceanside. In Oceanside, I depended less on family friends and neighbors. **Vocational Rehabilitation** and the

disability services at Tillamook Bay Community College were my sources of support as I earned my **Associate's degree** before moving on to Portland State University.

While living in Oceanside, I held a job as an assistant to a boy on the autism spectrum. He attended a rural school in Rockaway Beach. I saw firsthand the struggles many of the kids who needed services and supports had to deal with. From interacting with the kids and their families, I learned a lot about what was and was not working for them. But what stuck with me most is how the parents in that community banded together and filled in the gaps where services fell short.

Before moving to Oceanside, I worked at a school for deaf and hard of hearing children in Los Angeles where a lot of services and supports were available. It was a huge change to move to Oceanside and experience the lack of services in the surrounding rural coastal communities. My time in Oceanside taught me that there are some things people do successfully to either create what they need, or to make do as they advocate for improvement, understanding, accessibility, and inclusion.

Independence and **interdependence** are important for people with disabilities in any community. Independent living is an important concept, especially when it comes to equality and living a vibrant **self-determined** life. Living independently does not mean living without supports. It means living as independently as possible with meaningful supports in place.

Interdependence can happen in many forms. For example, perhaps a person can trade teaching computer skills—or even computer and Internet use at their house—in exchange for help with cooking and cleaning. Or perhaps someone who is skilled at building things could construct a ramp for a wheelchair on a person's home in exchange for a supply of wood to burn during the winter.

People in rural communities depending on each other and supporting each other is one of the reasons people enjoy and want to live in rural

areas. Here's a list of other reasons why people choose to live in rural settings:

- Ease of getting around town
- A direct connection with nature
- Friendlier communities
- Peaceful atmospheres
- Slower-paced living

The list above is not exhaustive (complete). But, as you can see, rural living has a lot to offer. People with disabilities should have options and choices regarding how and where they live.



IMAGE: A branch of green leaves, hanging against the backdrop of a river.




QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Why do you live in a rural area?
3. What are positive things about living in your town?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?



IMAGE: Branches filled with green apples towering against the sky.

STAYING IN A RURAL AREA DESPITE CHALLENGES

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share reasons why people enjoy and want to remain in rural areas despite challenges and limitations.
	Topics discussed: The specialness of rural areas including what rural areas offer people with disabilities.

TERMS:

Explorer mentality: Being self-determined and creating your own way of life, especially in a rural area.

Self-advocacy: Thought and action based upon one's own views and interests.

Smartphone: A cell phone that can perform functions (tasks) like a computer.

Speech pathology: The study and treatment of speech and language and its potential challenges.

LESSON

There are many things to point out when it comes to why people embrace and love rural areas. There are also challenges that don't always have easy answers. Lack of Internet access (broadband), lack of technology (computers, smartphones), lack of reliable transportation, lack of needed supports and services, and even a lack of a town library are all things that people often struggle with in rural areas.

Internet service, for example, is often a huge assistive service for people with disabilities. However, some rural areas do not offer stable or affordable Internet access.

The same goes for **smartphones**, which are capable of serving as assistive devices for those who have communication challenges. Sparse or nonexistent mobile phone service can impact accessibility, independence, and ideal communication.

When people ask why wouldn't someone just leave a rural area if experiencing challenges, there are several valid reasons. For example, a person might not be comfortable leaving the family, town, and things that they know and love. For some people, their town is all that they feel comfortable or "safe" with.

It's not always true that better and/or easier solutions can only be found

in big cities. Things that work in big cities can often work just as well in small towns, if not better. One example of this is a retired **speech pathologist** named Rose who serves a boy named Hudson in her small town. Rose travels to Hudson's home weekly. In exchange, Hudson's father supplies Rose with weekly fresh produce from their small farm. In this case, there's no need for Hudson and his family to live in a big city in order for Hudson to have access to quality speech pathology services.



IMAGE: A bowl of three tomatoes, one red, yellow, and green.

There's also the consideration of why a person with a disability—or anyone for that matter—should be made to feel that living in a rural area is wrong. Is it a wrong choice to live somewhere a person loves? And is a person wrong if they have a disability, live in a rural area, and are in need of support services? Why should people with disabilities be faulted for wanting to live and thrive in rural areas and to have access to meaningful support services? If we accept the idea that every person in every community has a right to be an equal participant, this most definitely includes people with disabilities, regardless of the size of the community.

People with disabilities have mentioned that living in a small community makes living a fulfilled life easier as people recognize them and come to know them. Many times, natural support persons are identified to meet their needs when possible. For example, a grocery store might automatically offer to have someone assist a frequent shopper with a

IMAGE: An almost-empty beach under a big blue sky.



disability in getting around the store, if the shopper happens to request. Or perhaps they might even be willing to set up a grocery delivery service. Another example would be an athletic club that agrees to swap the position of two pieces of machinery in order to make an area more accessible. Or perhaps a mailman might be willing to give front door service for someone who has difficulty getting down to their mailbox. All of those things can be much easier to set up in a small town versus a faster-paced big city.

Explorer mentality is another concept rural areas tend to support. Carving out one's own path in life is highly respected and encouraged. And people with disabilities also want to lead independent lives and make their own decisions about how and where they want to live.

Another point to consider is that **advocating** for equal rights and educating people in smaller towns can be much easier than doing so in larger towns. Acceptance, equality, inclusion, and respect are easier to teach and sustain when a community is smaller, interdependent, and much more connected.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. What challenges do you experience in your rural community?
Do you choose to remain in your rural community despite any challenges you face?
3. Do you think it is “wrong” for people with disabilities to want to live in rural areas and have access to support services? Why or why not?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?




PART TWO

the medical & social models of disability



IMAGE: An egg with a scared face drawn on it.

THE MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share information about the medical model of disability.
	Topics discussed: How the medical model view might not always be the best fit for people with disabilities who are self-advocates.

TERMS

Cochlear implant: An electronic assistive listening device that is surgically implanted. Cochlear implants provide a sense of sound to people who have significant hearing loss.

Disability community: People with disabilities who share common experiences and values and who band together to take an active part in culture and politics. The disability community supports acceptance, access, accommodation, leadership, respect, self-advocacy, and equality.

LESSON

There are many different models of disability (or, how people view disability). One of the most commonly held models is the **medical model** of disability.

The medical model often portrays disability as a negative state of being. Disability is viewed as undesirable and people with disabilities are viewed as broken and less than perfect. Disability is seen as something that prevents someone from leading a fulfilling life, realizing dreams, or reaching goals. Under this model, common reactions toward disability tend to be denial, guilt, and shame.

For example, someone who is following the medical model view only will likely see deafness as undesirable and even assume that deaf people are either interested in or desperate for a cure. In reality, there is a **Deaf community** that uses American Sign Language (ASL), has its own culture, and is filled with community appreciation and pride.

Some deaf people who use hearing aids or cochlear implants are sensitive to sound and can even be bothered by it. Many deaf people appreciate being able to remove their **cochlear implants** and/or hearing aids so that they can enjoy silence whenever they choose. Are there challenges for people who are deaf? You bet. But regardless of being either deaf or hearing, who doesn't experience challenges in life?

When the sole goal and remedy for disability is to make a person “normal,” the person with a disability might begin to feel as if they do not have the right to dream, make goals, and meet life head on regardless of their differences.



IMAGE: Someone has drawn an angry face on the well-known wheelchair user symbol.

Some professionals, like doctors or therapists, feel that they know best about disability. Though many professionals help people with disabilities in much needed ways, people with disabilities are the true experts on disability and how it impacts their lives. Our voices are important and need to be heard. That is why the role of self-advocates is crucial in making the world more accessible, equal, and friendly toward people with disabilities.

Some people with disabilities have significant support needs. And without support, their enjoyment of life and level of self-empowerment can become quite low. With supports in place, however, a whole new world opens. Disability activist Norman Kunc says that disability will always be present no matter how far technology advances, as disability is a normal part of human variation (the natural differences of the human race).




QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Why might it be harmful to view disability as a negative state of being?
3. Have you heard of or been involved with the **disability community**? Some examples include the Deaf community, the Blind community, and the Autistic Community. (These communities are different from groups run by parents or professionals, as they are run by and for people with disabilities who base their work upon firsthand experience.)
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?



IMAGE: Disability rights protest.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share information about the social model of disability.
	Topics discussed: How the social model view is embraced and advocated for by people with disabilities.

TERMS

Systemic barrier: Barriers related to outdated or bureaucratic (technical) processes that make accessing services difficult.

Neurological: Anything to do with the body's nervous system.

Universal design: The practice of designing buildings, environments, and products to be accessible to all.

LESSON

The social model often views disability as a neutral state of being. Disability is viewed as a factor of identity, and not as something negative that needs to be changed or corrected.

How society treats people with disabilities is directly related to disability. For example, when society ensures sidewalks and buildings are accessible, then people with disabilities have greater access to equality and inclusion. When we make information, technology, housing, and education accessible, negative impacts from disability decrease significantly.

Universal design is a concept that teaches society how to build buildings and make products and environments that are accessible to all, especially to people with disabilities. When we design all products and buildings in our environment to be accessible to the greatest extent possible, we eliminate many barriers for people with disabilities.

Making things accessible for people with disabilities is crucial. Our needs as people with disabilities vary greatly, yet our goals to reach equal playing ground (opportunity) and to have equal access, accessibility, and respect is united.

The very things that help people with disabilities often end up helping non-disabled people. For example, a person with a **neurological disability** who is sensitive to fluorescent lighting might request to have a meeting in a room with no fluorescent lighting and instead plenty of windows that provide natural light. The people who attend the meeting, who do not have light sensitivities, might appreciate the natural lighting and window views.

Another example would be if a person on the autism spectrum, who

happens to struggle with being too close to others, requested to hold a meeting in a place where there is plenty of space so that people are not crowded together. Other people attending the meeting, who do not have sensitivities to crowding or being touched, might appreciate having more room to put down their things and set up the things they might need for the meeting.

Closed captioning on television is intended for deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. But it also helps children learn how to read, as well as helps people who are learning the language through subtitles. Gyms and busy restaurants often turn on the captioning on their televisions so that their customers—

regardless of whether they experience hearing loss or not—can follow what is happening despite the background noise. Closed captioning is just one of many examples of how universal design can increase access for people with and without disabilities.

Universal design involves open communication with people with disabilities. Communication between people with disabilities and society at large impacts accessibility, as well as impacts successful integration of people with disabilities. Good communication paves the way for meaningful access and accommodations. Bad communication often leads to either unhelpful or nonexistent access and accommodations.

Systemic barriers, negative attitudes, and exclusion by society (whether purposeful or not) contribute to disability and the challenges experienced by people with disabilities. When we fail to consider the needs of people who are at all points on the spectrum of humanity, we fail our communities and each other, and disability-related challenges increase. Self-advocacy and education of society help make our communities inclusive.



IMAGE: An example of closed captions on YouTube.

QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Why might it be fairer to view disability as a positive identity feature versus negative?
3. What are some things about your town that could be changed to make programs or buildings more accessible and equal? Why would these changes be important to people with disabilities? And why would they be important to the community-at-large?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?




PART THREE

creating resources & promoting self-advocacy



IMAGE: A photo of mountains against a blue sky.

COMMON NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN RURAL AREAS

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share information about the needs of people with disabilities who live in rural areas.
	Topics discussed: The topics discussed include Centers for Independent Living, peer and family support systems, transportation, flexible work environments, volunteering, and resources.

TERMS

Centers for Independent Living: Organizations led by people with disabilities that support independence, self-determination, self-respect, and equal opportunity. CILs help people with disabilities live independently and participate fully in the community.

LESSON

Organizations run by individuals with disabilities or family members are sorely needed in rural areas. For example, the **National Youth Leadership Network (NYLN)** is currently working with a few different rural areas around the United States to engage, support, mentor, and empower youth to take leadership positions within their rural communities. Peer-run groups can be established by youth with disabilities banding together. Peer-run groups can pool ideas and resources, and work toward gaining leadership positions within their towns so that they can make meaningful changes.

In addition to peer-run groups, **Centers for Independent Living (CILs)** are of great importance to people with disabilities as well as the communities in which people with disabilities live. Rural-serving Centers for Independent Living help people with disabilities to live independently in rural settings.

People with disabilities have many common needs. CILs and other disability organizations work tirelessly to meet these needs. However, meeting those needs can prove more difficult in rural areas. In the sections below, some common needs of people with disabilities are discussed, and suggestions for meeting those needs in rural areas are offered.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation throughout rural areas is often a hot topic. Transportation is also a concern for community developers, for

education advocates, for tourism promotion, and nearly every other sector in rural communities. As for people with disabilities, this is an area where interdependence can be important. For example, a family with an accessible van can offer weekly or monthly rides to others in exchange for something they're in need of. Rides can be given in exchange for fresh farm produce, gas money, computer skills, or help with cooking and cleaning, etc.

FLEXIBLE WORK ENVIRONMENTS

Flexible work environments and vocational services for “job carving” (career preparation) are another area of need for people with disabilities. Work environments should be adapted to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. There are many ways to adapt work environments, or to make them more flexible. For example, some people look for jobs where they can work from home. Some work positions can allow full-time work from home, whereas other positions might require you to come into the office twice per week or so, even if you work at home the other days. Another way to adapt a work space would be



IMAGE: Binder clips.

to request permission to move obstacles that prevent accessibility.

Volunteering within the community, as well as connecting with **Vocational Rehabilitation** offices can be extremely helpful when it comes to gaining meaningful employment. Check out the Vocational Rehabilitation reference in the Resources listed at the end of this guidebook. (You can also type in a search engine on the Internet your state and the words “Vocational Rehabilitation” to begin exploring.)

VOLUNTEER WORK

Volunteer work can often lead to a job. It can take a few weeks, a few months, or even a few years for volunteer work to turn into paid work. When you volunteer, do your best to become indispensable (highly needed). Learn everything you can and put forth your best quality work or help. When you treat a volunteer position like a paying job, it can turn into a real paying job with time and patience. Do, however, ensure that no one is taking advantage of you or your time. When a volunteer position no longer feels like a good fit, it is often a sign to move onto something else.

HOUSING AND RECREATION

People with disabilities need affordable and **accessible housing options**. This is an area where self-advocates can get involved in their towns in order to get the word out about the importance of this, as well as affect legislation and laws in favorable ways.

Accessible recreational activities are another common need. Some rural towns offer a free bus ride to a community center or a health club, a few times per week. This is another thing self-advocates can get together and start advocating for in their towns.

Though it can seem impossible to make changes, either big or small, it's important not to give up hope. When things get tough or impossible, research online how other people or groups from small towns made something work. Where there's a will, there's a way!

MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

Again, **advocacy**, **support**, **mentorship**, and **leadership** are paramount for people with disabilities in both rural and metropolitan (city) areas. It's about getting together and making things happen. For example, if your town has a library with Internet access, perhaps the library can host a monthly get-together for people with disabilities, and even allow a private hour of use of their computers for a self-advocacy group to watch a disability-related webinar, or to have an online meeting with another self-advocacy group.

If transportation is an issue, aim to get as many people to the destination (meeting place) as possible. How do you include those who cannot make it? One idea is to use a conference phone line so that those who cannot attend in person can call in. Can someone volunteer to type or write up notes from a self-advocacy meeting and share them via email with others? Can another person divide up who will call the people who were unable to attend so that they can be filled in on the progress and happenings of the meetings?



IMAGE: Eating pizza.

Perhaps your self-advocate group can take turns hosting meetings at different advocates' houses. Those who are unable to leave their homes due to transportation issues might be willing to open their homes to use as meeting spots. With support, self-advocates in every rural community have the power to figure out how to make things work best for their needs in their communities.

Religious institutions and churches can also be a key resource for communities. They can be accessed for meeting locations, bus sharing, and other similar needs. Though churches are not held to the same standards and accessibility laws, they're often most willing to make adjustments based on need or to reach out to members for support.

Also worth mentioning is the importance of up-to-date information. Places serving people with disabilities, such as schools or Vocational Rehabilitation offices, can serve people best when their information is current. This is another worthwhile area to choose to volunteer in. For example, if you're a self-advocate and you happen to notice that your school, your local disability organization, or your nearest Vocational Rehabilitation office is lacking up-to-date resources, perhaps you could step in and volunteer to update things. You might prepare a resource folder, which could be as

simple as getting a 3-ring binder and filling it with printouts, and then labeling the folder as a resource folder. It can be set out for visitors near pamphlets and other materials. Ask permission first. However, you might write on the inside of the folder that visitors can ask for copies of up to three resources per visit.




QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Are there any schools, organizations, or service centers in your area that might be in need of updated resources? Would you be willing to volunteer to update their information? If so, what type of support might you need to make this happen?
3. Is there a place in your community that you would be interested in volunteering at? If so, who can support you in taking the steps to see if volunteer work is available?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?



IMAGE: Making poster boards.

CREATING RESOURCES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN RURAL AREAS (MAKING RURAL AREAS MORE ACCESSIBLE)

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share information about how to create resources in rural areas.
	Topics discussed: The appeal of rural areas including what rural areas can offer people with disabilities.

TERMS

Chamber of Commerce: An association that advances and protects the interests of the business community in an area.

Skill trade bulletin: A poster or sign-up sheet on which people can offer their skills in exchange for goods or services. For example, an artist might offer to draw a picture for a local farmer in exchange for some fresh tomatoes.

LESSON

Relationships and skill trading are excellent personal resources to develop. Correspondence, outreach, networking, education, and shared support also go hand-in-hand with effective advocacy.

Networking and **communicating** involve getting in touch with others who are like-minded, who are in the same situation as you, and who share your wants and needs. When you put out focused energy and intention, sooner or later, you will run into people who can and will connect with you and/or your group and help with your goals. Online research and resources can be a good place to start looking for others to connect to. Lack of Internet access, however, does not need to hold you back. Perhaps there's a local

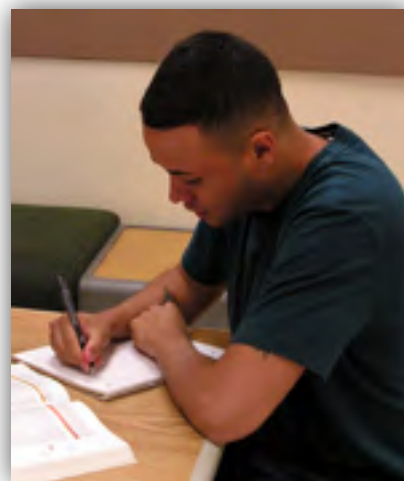


IMAGE: Taking notes.

organization that either runs a group you might be interested in being a part of, or where you can volunteer to start a group for people with disabilities who are interested in becoming involved self-advocates.

Self-advocates from neighboring towns can host meet and greets at community centers or libraries and/or start a self-advocate run support group or organization that is open to all people with disabilities.

When running a group for self-advocates, it is extremely important to include people with all types of disabilities. It is unfair, and against the true mission of the disability community, to turn away people who have significant support needs, or to turn away people who have a disability that you feel does not relate to you or your goals. If you are uncomfortable around someone, or you do not understand how to best include them, ask them questions in a respectful way so that you can ensure they have equal access. When you ask a person about their disability, ask in the same manner that you would want someone to use with you. For example, you might say something like, “Are there any accommodation needs you have that we might be able to provide?”

Effective advocacy and **inclusion** begin with how we address each other. For example, judging others on scales of severity is outdated and ineffective. Saying something like, “Oh, my hearing is not bad enough to have to use American Sign Language,” can hurt someone’s feelings. A person who uses sign language might very well be proud to be Deaf, as well as proud of American Sign Language, which happens to come from a rich culture and history.



IMAGE: Disability advocacy button.

Saying something like, “Oh, I am not that autistic. I only have Asperger’s,” is another example of something that can be hurtful to others. First off, all people with disabilities have support needs no matter if the support needs are minimal or great. Even non-disabled people have support needs. Secondly, using terms that suggest levels of function does little to educate others about each person’s individual needs. Functioning labels also put ideas out that someone is either super capable or not capable at all. That type of thinking is outdated, unfair, and has no place in either the disability community, or in a group run by and for self-advocates.

Pride and **cross-representation** are other things that should be highlighted in an effective group for self-advocates. When we make space for everyone to be welcome—whether or not we’re familiar with a

person's disability and support needs—we actively promote and practice inclusion. If someone has a disability or support needs that are unfamiliar to you, ask what they need in order to be fully included and supported in the group. Provide what you can, and don't be afraid to think outside of the box (try new ideas).

Accessing information for your group can be as simple as inviting someone from a [Center for Independent Living](#), a [Vocational Rehabilitation](#) office, or a disability-focused organization to come and speak to your group. These individuals may be self-advocates as well or positive allies to the disability community. If someone from one of those sources cannot attend in person, perhaps they could interact with you via Skype. Or if on-site Internet access is limited, maybe they can write an email to your group that answers some questions your group might have.

The email can then be shared at your next meeting.



IMAGE: Promote self-advocacy.

As for getting involved in communities, self-advocates can lobby for and serve on local advisory committees or boards and have a voice in the systems that make a town function successfully. A person who is familiar with how to educate organizations and local government on the importance of including the voices of people with disabilities will be of great help. Any self-advocate can learn how to do this

when the right connections and support are in place. Self-advocates can band together and show up at town meetings to voice how important it is to both listen to and respect the opinions of people with disabilities. Or, better yet, people with disabilities should consider running for public office to represent the disability community first-hand on such councils.

As for locating or creating a resource directory, a Center for Independent Living or a [Chamber of Commerce](#) may already have a listing that shows local resources and connections for individuals with disabilities and their families. Additionally, you can serve as a resource for individuals with disabilities and their families. Below are some ideas for

how you might advocate in your community.

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Sharing what you have learned is a great way to get involved as a self-advocate. If you like to learn things, go and teach or spread the news to others who also want to learn. For example, if you attend a conference that is disability-related, you can then go back to your local support group and share what you have learned with others in your community. Rural areas are spread out and it can be hard to travel and communicate throughout the area. If one person attends a meeting or a training, they can bring that information back to the community and share it with others. Passing along resources is an exciting way to engage other people.

LIBRARY DISPLAYS

Ask local libraries to order and stock a few up-to-date-books on disability and advocacy. Share the titles of the books you would like to see in the library. If needed, host a fundraiser in order to raise monies for new materials. If your library already has great books on disability, perhaps you and another self-advocate can ask the library if you can create a display to showcase the books for a month. You could even turn this into a yearly group activity. Another idea is to design something educational about

disability, such as a disability timeline, and ask the library if you can place it somewhere in the library.

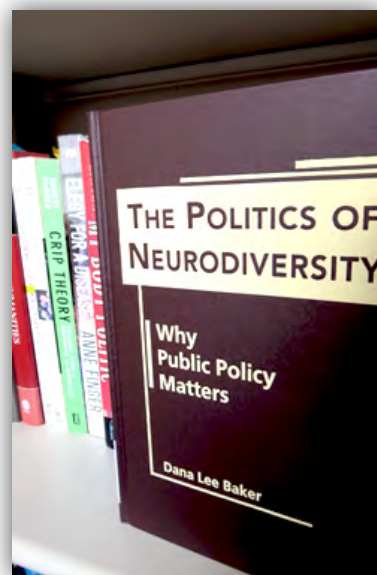


IMAGE: Disability advocacy books.

MEDIA CONTACT

Volunteer to educate your town about disability by asking to write something for the local newspaper, town blog, or town

website. Perhaps you can have a weekly, monthly, or biannual column about disability. If you cannot get a column—or some other sort of writing space—ask for your self-advocate group to be interviewed so that you can have a public say in what's important for your group. Self-advocates who have just formed a peer-led group can be a great source of news and pride for a community.

CREATE A SKILL TRADE BULLETIN

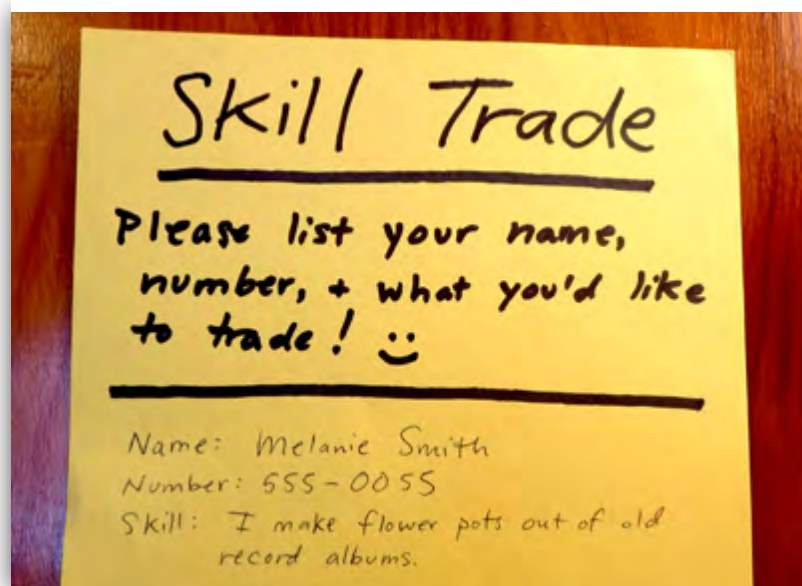
Another idea is to **organize and set up a skill trade bulletin** (announcement) at a community center or a library. A simple board with a clean professional look can work wonders to attract users. To do this:

- Obtain a large poster board or something similar
- Label the board at the top as *Skill Trade Bulletin*
- Make a few columns for people to write in
- List what skills you have to trade in one of the columns

Ideas of skills to list that can be traded include: cooking, babysitting, computer, editing, food canning, gardening, sewing, tutoring, or woodworking. Anything you do well that can be of

benefit to others in a trade should be listed.

IMAGE: Skill trade bulletin.



The idea is to create a board where people in your community can list a skill and then their phone number or email next to it. This can be a resource for the whole community to utilize. And the point, of course, is to trade skills for needed services. If permitted,

there can be a space next to the bulletin board for people to tack up business cards for services they're willing to trade.

Sharing information and resources is a fabulous way to connect. It is important, however, to be careful about what information you share about yourself in public. **If you're unsure about what to share, ask someone you trust.**

Many people with disabilities in rural areas find that joining community clubs that serve people in various ways helps to break down social barriers. It can also help people with disabilities to become more active contributors in the communities in which they live. In club settings, self-advocates can educate others about disability and address accessibility issues. The best part is that getting out and about and meeting others can lead to useful resources, new friends, and stronger community alliances.




QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Are you a part of a club or a group in your area? If so, what is the name of it, and what is it about?
3. Would you be interested in getting a group together to set up a Skill Trade Bulletin? How could you go about doing this? What support do you need to make this happen?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?



IMAGE: Nothing about us without us!

FORGOTTEN FACTS ABOUT PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

	Time allotted: 30 minutes
	Goals: The goal of this section is to share a few important facts and reminders about people with disabilities.
	Topics discussed: Self-advocacy, mentorship, goals, and active leadership.

TERMS

Tokenism: Making only a small or symbolic effort to do a particular

thing. (For example, having only one person with a disability on the board of an organization that wishes to truly empower and serve people with disabilities.)

LESSON

People with disabilities know best what does and does not work for them. They have experience with many different situations and often understand what they need for **accommodations**, **services**, and **supports**. Silencing the voices of self-advocates and refusing to listen to their ideas—even if it is done unintentionally—goes against true advocacy, access, and inclusion for people with disabilities. Everyone has a purpose and deserves a chance to fulfill that purpose.

People with disabilities have a lot to learn from each other as well. Information sharing can change lives and put people in touch with one another. What one self-advocate knows and can share can positively change the life of another self-advocate.

Educating others that we are all dependent on each other, whether disability is present or not, is an important part of **self-advocacy**. For example, everyone depends upon stores to provide us with groceries. We depend on gas stations to provide us with gas, and we depend on schools and colleges to educate us. People with disabilities, like anyone else, have needs, and like anyone else, depend on others in their families and communities. Disability is a natural part of the human experience. Therefore, especially in rural communities, providing accommodations for people with disabilities to have equal access and to be fully contributing members of that community should be a universal goal.



IMAGE: Disability rights protest.

Just as in big cities, people with disabilities in rural areas make excellent leaders in their communities. It's important to remember that people with disabilities have their own priorities and interests. For example, a local team of self-advocates associated with an Independent Living Center in South Carolina listed the items below as goals for their rural communities:

EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY

- Mentor students with disabilities who are still in school.
- Host community events and raise public awareness.
- Plan activities for people with disabilities so they can interact with peers.
- Coordinate outreach events for parents and youth to figure out what's working and what's missing.
- Teach parents to encourage their children with disabilities to become self-advocates at young ages.

EMPOWER SELF-ADVOCATES

- Recruit mentors with disabilities in the community who are strong self-advocates.
- Train people with disabilities and their family and friends on how to be advocates in communities, homes, schools/colleges, jobs and other places.
- Link disabled and non-disabled youth via meaningful activities.
- Create fun and easy-to-use printed resources that provide statewide tools for self-advocates.
- Establish an ongoing sustainable (continuing) network for youth.

People with disabilities have ideas that are rich with wisdom. By having the opportunity to take active roles in their communities, they naturally

serve as leaders. Supporting meaningful education led by and for people with disabilities is a progressive way to view disability. The days of **tokenism** must end. It is no longer feasible or sustainable to consider non-essential roles in communities for people with disabilities.

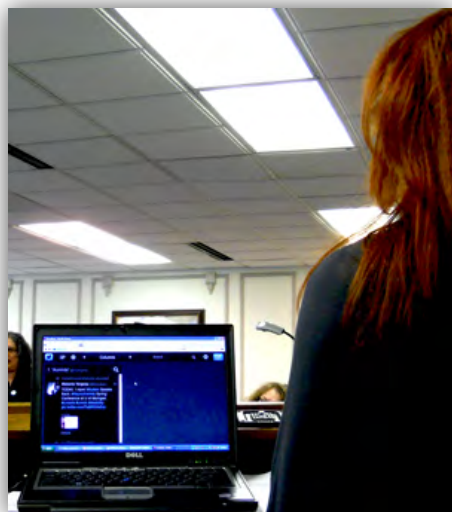


IMAGE: Public speaking.

People with disabilities have the right to share opinions, to be included, and to partake in important decision-making. Talking down to, ordering around, or looking down upon people with disabilities—whether intended or not—is outdated and unproductive.

With access, accommodations, and support, people with disabilities can and should equally serve on boards, committees, councils, and so forth. Responsibilities, duties, and contributions should be entrusted to people with disabilities. Accommodations needed in

order to carry out duties should also be provided.

An ongoing goal of the disability community is to increase the power of statewide organizations to have self-advocates with disabilities serve effectively on their policy-making bodies. **Nothing About Us Without Us!**

QUESTIONS

1. What can you relate to or connect with from the reading?
2. Have you ever held a position on a board, council, committee, or work group? If so, what was your experience? Did you find that role to be meaningful?
3. What can be said when a person—whether intentionally or unintentionally—disempowers (hurts the confidence of) people with disabilities?
4. What is one new thing that you learned or that stood out to you?
5. Were any words or terms used that you would like to know more about?

PART FOUR

activity instructions + additional materials

INTRODUCTION TO ACTIVITY

Exploring ways to directly empower and include people with disabilities who live in rural areas often includes the topics of access, community education, resources, self-advocacy, and support systems. In addition, one of the most important topics is sustainability (ongoing support and success). The goal of this activity is to create an atmosphere that helps your community form connections and friendships that are lasting and sustainable, as well as to foster both inclusion and interdependence.

In this activity, participants will be decorating plant pots to use for collecting names, contact information, and notes about the personal interests of community allies and friends. The plant pots symbolize **earth**, which is the literal foundation of every community. The moss or the twigs that will be placed inside of the decorated pots symbolize **support**, which every community needs. Business cards and/or Popsicle sticks that will be printed with contact information symbolize **community**.

This activity aims to get participants acquainted and in touch with each other after a day or two of learning together.

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

This activity encourages bringing people together to form a community within a community. Through artwork, participants will leave with a decorative plant pot full of meaningful community connections. These pots can be placed on bookshelves or desks, for example.

Time allotted: 45 minutes

MATERIALS NEEDED

It is not necessary to have each item listed below. The most needed items are **plant pots**, **moss or twigs**, and **something to decorate the plant pots with**. The more items you bring, the more creative participants can be with decorating their pots.

- **Plastic plant pots for each participant.** Be sure to have a few extras on hand. For example, if you have 11 participants, you might want to purchase 15 pots. (Feel free to use terracotta—clay—plant pots if you would like. They look great, yet they're more easily broken. The drying time for the paint might increase as well.)

Plant pots can be ordered inexpensively, in bulk, on a website like [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Simply visit [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), locate the search box, and type in “nursery plant pots”. If you do not have Internet access, visit a local store that sells gardening supplies.

6” (six-inch) pots should work well. The main thing to remember about size is not to get them too small. If you are unsure about plant pot sizes, ask someone for help. Perhaps a salesperson, or a friend or a neighbor could make a suggestion.

- **Artificial (fake) moss, or “Spanish moss.”** This will be placed in the bottom of the pots. If you cannot find moss, look for something similar. For example, someone could gather a bunch of clean dry twigs outside and break them into small pieces. You only need enough to fill the bottom of each pot.

You can find Spanish moss, or something similar, at a store that sells arts and crafts materials. It can also be ordered online at a place like [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Type “Spanish moss” into Amazon’s search box. Most facilitators choose the least expensive option that will provide enough moss for their participants.

- **Paints and/or markers that work on plastic.** These will be used to decorate the plant pots. We recommend light-colored plant pots, if possible, so that the markers and paints will show better. These can also be purchased at an arts and crafts store,

or on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Remember to check that the markers and paints work on plastic. For example, Sharpie brand markers tend to work on most plastics—and Sharpie makes several different colors.

- **Magazines or brochures that depict (show) rural life.** The pictures in these magazines can be cut out and pasted on the inside and outside of the pots. The magazines do not need to be new. See if a neighbor, a friend, or a participant can bring magazines that can be used by the participants.
- **Scissors.** To be used to cut out magazine photos.
- **Glue that will work on plastic.** The glue can be used on photos from magazines, pieces of twigs, or other decorative art.
- **A craft bag of dyed feathers and/or leaves.** To be used to decorate the pots. Feathers and/or leaves can be glued on around the paint, photos, or twigs people are using to decorate their pots. A bag of feathers or leaves to be used for crafts can be found at a local arts and crafts store. They can also be searched for and ordered online at a place like Amazon.com.
- **A craft bag of Popsicle sticks.** To be used for sticking in the Spanish moss to hold up participants' business cards or names and contact info.
- **Thin black Sharpies or markers.** To be used for writing contact info on the Popsicle sticks.

Feel free to bring anything else you feel can be used to decorate the pots with. Rural-themed stickers, glitter, or a craft bag of pebbles (to be used to line the bottom of each pot) are all ideas of extra items you might want to consider.

PREPARING FOR THE ACTIVITY

The plant pots symbolize **earth**. The Spanish moss (or the twigs placed inside) symbolizes **support**. The business cards and/or printed Popsicle

sticks symbolize **community**. The facilitator, or a helper, is encouraged to make one or two pots beforehand for others to see as examples.

Before your big day, instruct participants to bring several of their personal business or contact cards if they happen to have some. If they do not have business cards or contact cards, do not worry. Participants still have the option to write down their names and contact information on Popsicle sticks.

Also, in preparation for the activity, be sure to ask if anyone in the room has any allergies to any of the products that will be used so you can have alternative materials or resources on hand for the event. For example, before leading this activity, ask, “Does anyone here have a sensitivity to glue or paint?” If so, ask how you can help ensure that person has a safe working space.

When it’s time to begin the activity:

- Hand each person a plant pot, equal amounts of Spanish moss (or twigs), and several Popsicle sticks.
- Place all craft materials within easy reach of participants.
- Show participants the sample pot/s you made. Explain that it is just an example and that full artistic creativity and individuality is encouraged.
- Describe how the plant pots symbolize **earth**. The Spanish moss (or the twigs placed inside) symbolizes **support**. The business cards and/or printed Popsicle sticks symbolize **community**.
- During the activity, walk around and chat with group participants as they work. If someone appears to be in need of help, ask before you offer.
- When a person is done decorating their pot, have them insert the Spanish moss (or twigs)—just enough to line the bottom third of the plant pot.

The last part of this activity is especially meaningful. It's time for participants to walk around, show off their pots, and collect business or contact cards, or Popsicle sticks, which have been addressed with names and contact info. Some people might even want to glue business cards to the tops of Popsicle sticks so that they look like flowers in their pot.

A Popsicle stick might have a name and an email or a phone number on the front. On the back, it might have information about that person's interest in the community. For example, the front might read: **Sybil Zaks, (123) 456-7891**. The back of the stick might read: **Rotary Club**, or **4H**, or **Autism Society**, or **National Youth Leadership Network - NYLN**.

The tops of the Popsicle sticks can be decorated, if there is time, by adding flowers, animals, trees, or other images that have been cut from magazines. Even stickers or streamers can be used—whatever people wish to work with or create.

When all decorating is complete, wiggle the Popsicle sticks into the Spanish moss or twigs to keep them upright. If they won't stay up, you likely need more moss or twigs. You'll know there's been enough moss or twigs used if the sticks stand up high enough out of the pots.

Once everyone has collected the business cards and Popsicle sticks they wish to have for their pots, bring everyone together again and ask the questions that follow on the next page.



IMAGE: A business card inside a pot.

CREDITS: Modified from "Tender Plant,"
Open Clip Art.org.

QUESTIONS

1. What did you like best about this activity?
2. What are the most meaningful things that stood out to throughout this training guide?
3. Do you feel that you have made useful community allies (partners and supporters) and contacts?
4. Is there anything else you feel we should do before we wrap up our activity and day together?
5. Who remembers what the pot, the Spanish moss (or twigs), and the business cards/Popsicle sticks represent?

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

People with disabilities play an important role in their communities. By working together, we can educate and support our communities in making meaningful positive changes. By coming together, supporting each other, understanding each other's needs, and knowing our goals and interests, we can make an impact. Nothing About Us Without Us!

RESOURCES

ALLIES IN SELF-ADVOCACY

<http://www.alliesinselfadvocacy.org/resources>

Provides meaningful resources for self-advocates and the general public, including resources for accessible presentations.

ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAMS FOR RURAL INDEPENDENT LIVING (APRIL)

<http://www.april-rural.org>

APRIL is the unified voice of independent living in rural America. They're a national membership organization dedicated to advancing the rights and responsibilities of people with disabilities in rural America.

APRIL works to further the civil rights of all people with disabilities regardless of age, disability, income, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or nationality.

APRIL also wants to ensure that young people with disabilities are integrated into all facets of program development and delivery. APRIL is truly committed to the disability community mantra: Nothing About Us Without Us.

Be sure to check out APRIL's rural transportation voucher project! They also have a work group that's tackling the next federal transportation bill.

CENTER FOR PLAIN LANGUAGE

<http://www.centerforplainlanguage.org>

Plain language is information that is focused on readers. When you write in plain language, you create information that works well for the people who use it, whether online or in print. Plain language is behavioral. Can the people who are the audience for the material quickly and easily:

- find what they need
- understand what they find
- act appropriately on that understanding

The definition of “plain” depends on the audience. What is plain language for one audience may not be plain language for another audience. Check out the Center for Plain Language to learn more about the benefits and guidelines of plain language.

CENTER FOR RURAL STRATEGIES

<http://www.ruralstrategies.org/>

The Center for Rural Strategies seeks to improve economic and social conditions for communities in the countryside and around the world through the creative and innovative use of media and communications. By presenting accurate and compelling portraits of rural lives and cultures, they hope to deepen public debate and create a national environment in which positive change for rural communities can occur.

Rural Strategies publishes information about rural issues, works with the press to assist them in the coverage of rural topics, and works with a wide range of partners to build a stronger voice on behalf of rural communities. Rural America's fate is interrelated to those of metropolitan and urban America. Building stronger rural communities helps the nation as a whole.

JOB ACCOMMODATION NETWORK (JAN)

<http://www.askjan.org>

JAN provides a list of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) centers around the States.

KIDS AS SELF ADVOCATES (KASA)

<http://www.fvkasa.org/index.php>

Kids As Self Advocates is a national, grassroots project created by youth with disabilities for youth. KASA members are teens and young adults with disabilities speaking out. This organization supports youth in making their own choices and advocating for themselves with needed information and support.

LLANO GRANDE CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

<http://www.llanogrande.org/>

The Llano Grande Center and its philosophy were developed and nurtured by local people with a particular appreciation for local history and wisdom. With local assets as the context, the Center's vision is to inspire a youth culture that aspires to attend college and engage in community change.

NATIONAL CONSUMER LAW CENTER (NCLC)

<http://www.nclc.org/>

NCLC focuses on advancing fairness in the marketplace for all. Since 1969, NCLC has used its expertise in consumer law and energy policy to work for consumer justice and economic security

for low-income and other disadvantaged people, including older adults, in the U.S. Check out their website to learn more about economic fairness.

NCLC houses the archive link to the webinar and presentation slides this training guide is based upon. Follow this link:

<http://www.nclc.org/disability-and-rural-communities-making-a-difference-in-small-towns/event-details.html>

NATIONAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP NETWORK (NYLN)

<http://www.nyln.org>

NYLN builds power and community amongst youth with disabilities. Youth leadership is essential to the mission. NYLN works to build power among people with disabilities between the ages of 16- 28 years old. They support young people in their role as the next generation of leadership in the Disability Rights Movement. NYLN is the only youth-led disability rights nonprofit organization in the country.

PROJECT ACTION

<http://www.projectaction.easterseals.com>

Check out Project Action (via Easter Seals) to learn more about rural transportation resources.

RESEARCH AND TRAINING CENTER ON DISABILITY IN RURAL COMMUNITIES (RTC: RURAL)

<http://www.rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu>

RTC:Rural focuses on community participation and independent living, employment and vocational rehabilitation, and health and

wellness. They also have several projects, such as evaluating community accessibility, and peer support for rural mental health.

RURAL ASSISTANCE CENTER (RAC)

<http://www.raconline.org>

RAC provides useful information about independent living, Medicaid, Community-Based Services Waiver programs, rural schools, workforce, as well as transportation issues, housing assistance, and the ADA.

RURALXCHANGE

<http://www.ruralxchange.net/>

RuralXChange is a community of people working to improve the sustainability, as well as accelerate the vitality of rural communities. Visit RuralXChange to become a member, share ideas, find solutions, and follow issues groups and discussions.

RuralXChange also houses an archive link to the webinar and presentation slides this training guide is based upon. Follow this link:

<http://www.ruralxchange.net/webinars/ - 111913>

GLOSSARY (WORD DEFINITIONS)

Associate's degree: A degree earned after a two-year course of study, usually from a community or a junior college.

Centers for Independent Living: Organizations led by people with disabilities that support independence, self-determination, self-respect, and equal opportunity. CILs help people with disabilities live independently and participate fully in the community.

Chamber of Commerce: An association that advances and protects the interests of the business community in an area.

Cochlear implant: An electronic assistive listening device that is surgically implanted. Cochlear implants provide a sense of sound to people who have significant hearing loss.

Disability community: People with disabilities who share common experiences and values who band together to take an active part in culture and politics. The disability community supports acceptance, access, accommodation, leadership, respect, self-advocacy, and equality.

Explorer mentality: Being self-determined and creating your own way of life, especially in a rural area.

Independent living: Advocacy by and for persons with all types of disabilities that supports self-determined life decisions. Independent Living Centers (ILCs) help people with disabilities to be fully participatory members of their communities.

Interdependence: Two or more people or things being dependent on each other, with neither person overpowering the other.

Neurological: Anything to do with the body's nervous system.

Self-advocacy: Thought and action based upon one's own views and interests.

Self-determination: The process of a person controlling your own life.

Sensory sensitivity: Having high or low sensitivity (awareness and/or reaction) to what we see, feel, hear, or touch.

Skill trade bulletin: A poster or sign-up sheet on which people can offer their skills in exchange for goods or services. For example, an artist might offer to draw a picture for a local farmer in exchange for some fresh tomatoes.

Smartphone: A cell phone that can perform functions (tasks) like a computer.

Speech pathology: The study and treatment of speech and language and its potential challenges.

Systemic barrier: Barriers related to outdated or bureaucratic structures or procedures and processes that make accessing services or programs difficult.

Tokenism: Making only a small or symbolic effort to do a particular thing. (For example, having only one person with a disability on the board of an organization that wishes to truly empower and serve people with disabilities.)

Universal design: The practice of designing buildings, environments, and products to be accessible to all.

Vocational Rehabilitation: A state-by-state program that helps people with disabilities to prepare for, find, and keep suitable jobs.