

## Independent Living Youth Transitions Coordinator Funding

### Request

We request that funds originally requested through DSD to fund a transitions coordinator be restored as outlined in our original request.

### Background

In the summer of 2007 the disability community held a series of statewide MetNet meetings as well as a get together in October of that year to determine what the greatest needs were among the entire community. From these meetings, youth in transition and the coordination of statewide transition efforts emerged as one of the top priority areas among the disability community. As a result of these efforts, the Independent Living community worked with DPHHS and the Disability Services Division to put forth an EPP proposal that was sent to the Governor's office requesting \$50,000/year (of the original \$100,000/year that was requested) to allow the Disability Services Division to contract with the Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) to establish a staff position that would allow for the continued implementation of the statewide Montana Youth Transitions (MYTransitions) Project, which includes the coordination of the state transition conference, maintaining the MYTransitions web site, as well as coordinating statewide Disability Mentoring Day activities; and to establish a statewide system of coordination and communication with the Governor's Advisory Council on Disability and other disability and transition related task forces.

### Need

The Montana Office of Public Instruction school year 2007-2008 show that there are 6,287 students with disabilities between the ages of 14-21 in Montana schools.

Of those 6,287 youth with disabilities, the top five categories are as follows:

- 3,775 or 60% have a learning disability
- 831 or 13% have other health impairments
- 497 or 7.9% have an emotional disturbance
- 454 or 7.2% have a developmental disability
- 229 or 3.6% have multiple disabilities

All 6,287 youth will need to plan for their transition to a successful life with a disability after exiting the school system.

Montana needs a coordinated, sustainable approach on the issue of transition. A group of agencies in the public and private sector have worked to create MYTransitions Project which includes a statewide web site ([www.montanayouthtransitions.org](http://www.montanayouthtransitions.org)) and an annual conference that is specific to transition and is cross-disability in approach.

Funds are needed to continue to work of these partners. We are seeking to restore the original \$50,000-\$100,000/year budget request to hire a staff person to administer the MYTransitions Web Site, coordinate the annual conference, and coordinate a statewide Disability Mentoring Day. Additionally these funds will be used to conduct regional meetings related to the topic of transition.

The partners in MYTransitions Project have created a framework for partnership between the public and private sector, have demonstrated that these efforts can be sustainable, and now we need the state to become a partner in this transition effort. There are 6,287 reasons why the state should assist in the sustainability of the MYTransitions Project.

EXHIBIT 1

DATE 1/22/09

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January 22, 2009

To: The Joint Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

From: Viola Spain, 1250 34<sup>th</sup> Street #G103, Missoula, Montana 59801 - 542-2289

Re: HB2 - Independent Living Centers (ILC's) and their funds

I fell that increasing the funding for Independent Living Centers (ILC's) is very important. I have bee a part of the Summit ILC for 12 years as a consumer, employee and now as a volunteer.

As a consumer of Summit ILC in Missoula, MT, their resources have been a better match for me than the other community resource centers and social services. For example, I have used them when applying for Social Security benefits as well as maintaining my benefits paperwork that was required when I held a job.

Summit ILC also got me connected with Blind and Low Vision information services. Par of this process was getting my guide dog, Madrid. Summit helped me with the logistics of filling out the paperwork, also provided support before, during and after the process of attending the school of Guide Dogs for the Blind in San Rafael, CA.

Summit ILC has also been a great resource center and support system for my transition to living independently. For example, Summit helped me with my housing situation. The IL Specialist has been assisting me to be more independent, and to find a living arrangement that can accommodate my disability.

I take IL Skills classes from Summit. Now that I am older, I am in a different stage of my life than I was before. These classes are helping me to learn more about myself, how to take care of myself, and how to slow down and work at a different pace. They also helped me to learn how to ride the Mountain Line and the Para transit systems in Missoula, which increases my ability to get around to areas of town which are too far to walk from my house. It is great having all of this important resource information in one place.

When I was employed as a Peer Advocate, I learned a lot about accessibility issues, and got to be a part of improving accessibility in the Missoula community. I also learned about our disability culture and the history of the independent living movement. I have traveled to Helena in the past during the legislative sessions. Summit ILC helped me to get my voice heard.

Finally, but most important, the Summit ILC is wonderful because it helped me accept my disability, and accept others with disabilities. It took out the fear or anxiety that society gave me about being around others with disabilities. It helped me to realize that we are all the same with different things going on, and we are all human. We all get to make new friends.  
Thank you for your time.

EXHIBIT

DATE

1  
1/22/09

January 22, 2009

To: The Joint Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  
Re: HB2 - Independent Living Centers and funds

I am Janice and I have had a disability since I was ten years old when I received a head injury. Now I am an adult and live with my adult brother in a duplex in Missoula.

I have taken many classes at Summit so that I can live in the community independently. I really liked the money management class because I learn how to keep my budget in order. Before I had taken the class I was not paying my bills on time and I was late on stuff and didn't know where my money was going to. Now I have a system set up so that I can organize my bills and I pay my bills on time. Some classes I have taken again several years later because I get more out of it the second time around.

When I have a question that I don't know I call Summit for information and they let me know what my options are. I can call back with a different question and they are always helpful and friendly.

I would like you to continue the money that is used for Independent Living Center services because I see many people use their services. I many more people could benefit from them.

Sincerely,  
*Janice Salomon*  
Janice Salomon  
2106 Wyoming  
Missoula, MT 59801  
543-2259