Building Capacity for Full Community Participation: Some Lessons Learned

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RTC on Community Living Retreat
Sept. 15-16, 2014
Houston, Texas

A Partnership to Build Capacity
Context

• Despite progress, people with disabilities still encounter barriers to participating in their communities.
Two Intervention Components

• 2.5 day training workshop for CIL staff, using the Community Tool Box (CTB) Curriculum

• Ongoing technical assistance to assist the CILs:
  – Monthly consultation/coaching using phone and web-conferencing
  – Monthly email and phone contacts as needed
  – Web-based peer support
  – Internet-based resources through the CTB

Project Purpose

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) have been at the forefront of creating changes to make community participation more accessible to people with disabilities.

This project is designed to expand the capacity of Center staff and those served to change community conditions so that consumers can engage more fully in civic life.
Anticipated Outcomes

Evidence of increased community participation of consumers with disabilities.

Changes in quality of life for consumers with disabilities due to increased community participation.

Building CIL Capacity

CIL staff receive training and technical assistance to enhance their ability to create conditions that ensure opportunities for community participation.

To make participation easier, changes are needed in systems, programs, policies and practices.
CIL Capacity Training

Participants initially received training in six core competency areas to enhance their ability to bring about change and improvement. The training curriculum is based on the Community Tool Box (http://ctb.ku.edu)

Core Competencies for Building Community Capacity

• Assessing Community Needs and Resources
• Analyzing Problems and Goals
• Developing Strategic and Action Plans
• Developing an Intervention
• Increasing Participation and Membership
• Advocating for Change
Each Module Includes:

- Learning objectives
- Rationales
- How-to steps
- Activities (opportunities to apply knowledge)
- Examples from the field
- Additional online tools for support
- Practice guide (workbook)
- Glossary

Documenting Change

The Online Documentation and Support System (ODSS) is being used to help CILs track and maintain a real-time data system of their services provided, development activities, community actions and community changes.
Project Definitions

Development Activities - Actions taken to prepare or enable the group to address its goals and objectives

Community Actions - Actions to bring about a specific new or modified program, policy, or practice in the community or system

Community Changes - New or modified programs, policies, or practices in the community or system

ARCIL’s Experience with Community Capacity Building

Research & Training Center on Community Living
ARCIL Illustrative Development Activities

Submission of letter of support for grant application submitted by partner organization

Policy Advocate participated in meeting of the Disability Advisory Workgroup of the Texas Dept. of Housing and Community Affairs, discussing development of housing programs

Submitted application and completed qualification to refer consumer to “Dress for Success” program – providing clothes to assist with employment

Evaluated IL skills classes

Purchased technologies for consumer instruction

Completed APRIL survey on transportation advocacy activities
ARCIL Illustrative Community Actions

ARCIL Policy Advocate presented to Travis County and City of Austin planning group on housing needs.

ARCIL staff participated in a conference call with the local homeless coalition to provide comments on expanding capacity to provide housing assistance.

ARCIL Policy Advocate presented on the needs of people with disabilities in Emergency Preparedness to representatives of Austin Fire Department and Travis County EMS.

ARCIL Policy Advocate participated in quarterly meeting of the Regional Transportation Coordination Committee, developing recommendations for improvements in public transportation.
ARCIL submitted testimony to Austin city council on ordinance to require visitability accessibility standards for housing construction. The ordinance passed.

ARCIL completed 2 sessions of an IL Skills class called Office Technology.

Participated in regional ADRC planning meeting. Entered into MOU with the Area Agency on Aging of the Capital Area and other partners with goal of developing an Aging and Disability Resource Center.

ARCIL began a new project under a grant agreement with Capital Metro for a New Freedom transportation program. The program will provide travel training and volunteer driver support to 50 individuals with disabilities per year for travel needs with an origin or destination outside Capital Metro’s bus and paratransit service area.
ARCIL Experience with Community Capacity Building

Policymakers want Return on Investment.

CIL reporting processes – like the 704 annual report – do a poor job of demonstrating ROI.

On the federal level, the CIL program has been cited for lack of demonstrated value.

In Spring of 2013, the Texas Legislature declined to increase funding for CILs.

The reason cited was inability to understand and quantify the value of the work of the CILs.
ARCIL Experience with Community Capacity Building

In September 2013, ARCIL hosted representatives of the state VR agency and the legislative budget office to explain the functions and value of CILs.

ARCIL used the Building Capacity model as a guide for documenting activities to show context and impact – goal area, geographic area, ecological level, setting, change strategy, etc.

The ODSS provides a format for producing a good narrative.

ARCIL Experience with Community Capacity Building

Presentation to VR agency staff and state legislative staff on CIL operations, funding and service outcomes. (Agency wrote report to legislative “Sunset” committee describing CILs as redundant to activities of ADRCs)

Presentation to Sunset Committee staff on CIL operations, funding and service outcomes. (Sunset recommendation to transfer the IL Services program to Texas CILs: $10 million per year)

Assisted Texas Assc of Centers for Independent Living on development of written response and testimony to Texas Legislature regarding Sunset recommendation (Assistance from Building Capacity program).
Lessons Learned to Date

CILs engage in important community change efforts for independent living

Increasing demands on CILs stretch the human resources available for this work

Community change work takes time, community partnerships, and dedicated resources

CILs can benefit from systematically documenting their efforts for reporting and dissemination

CILs report utility in Community Tool Box supports for their efforts

CIL leaders report utility in meeting together to share successes, challenges, and resources

Next steps/ Aspirations

• Encourage exchange and resource sharing among CILs; Create a “menu” of community change strategies implemented by CILs; Enhance availability of capacity-building supports for CILs

• Better understand the process mechanisms (such as action planning) that are associated with enhancing community participation initiatives of CILs

• Capture lessons learned and disseminate findings to other CILs through publication as well as through the publically accessible Community Tool Box
Implications

• **For consumers** – Guidance for enhancing advocacy efforts to assure community conditions for full participation

• **For practitioners and advocates** – Methods for documenting community change; Methods for building capacity for community change

• **For policymakers** – Enhanced documentation for sharing the value of CIL efforts; Building CIL capacity

• **For researchers** – Better understanding factors affecting community change brought about by CILs; Case studies of CIL efforts to build capacity for community participation

Acknowledgements

Co-authors: ARCIL Inc. colleagues John Meinkowsky and Jack Stratton and KU colleagues Glen W. White (PI), Jerry Schultz (Co-PI), Christina Holt, Jean Ann Summers, Dot Nary, and Jeff Gordon

The contents of this presentation were developed under a grant from the Department of Education, National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) grant number H133B110006. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.
Thank you!
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