Change and Growth: New Service Covers Kansas Consumers with Independent Living Counseling

*Independence, Inc. Brings on New Staff to Expand Services and Provide Independent Living Counseling Through the Working Healthy Program*

Independence, Inc. is expanding its services in 2020 to include Independent Living Counseling (ILC) through the Working Healthy - W.O.R.K. program. With independent living as our adhered-to philosophy and the basis of the work we do, bringing on board some fabulous Independent Living Counselors and offering this service to consumers statewide, just seemed like the right fit and the right step. Working Healthy is a work-incentive, Medicaid Buy-in Program that supports and encourages people with disabilities to work, thus increasing income while not jeopardizing health care benefits. W.O.R.K. (Work Opportunities Reward Kansas) is the program through which consumers can in enroll in various Working Healthy services - one of which, is Independent Living Counseling. We are...
pleased to begin offering this service in January and our coverage is state-wide!
Who is Eligible for ILC services? You must be: age 16-64; meet SS definition of disability;
have verified earned income from competitive employment subject to FICA/SECA taxes;
earn at least $65.01/month; Earn at or above the federal minimum wage of $7.25/hour and
be a Kansas Resident.

Guest Blog: Person-Centered Approach and Self-Direction are the Wind Beneath the
Wings of Missouri College Student

"Joyful" is the word often used to describe Rachel Mast, posing in front of Missouri State University where
she is a student in the Bear POWER Program (Promoting Opportunities for Work, Education and
Resilience)

Photo and Blog submitted by Jawanda Mast, mom of Rachel

My daughter Rachel receives services under the Home and Community Based
Waiver Services (HCBS) Self-Directed
Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
Waiver. She qualified for services just
before her senior year in high
school. Rachel was fully included
throughout her school journey and has
been included in the community and
church activities. It is only natural that
she wanted to go to college like her
friends. When she was born with Down
syndrome just over twenty years ago, no
one was talking about college. There were
only a handful of programs. Fortunately,
today there are around 280 college
programs for students with intellectual
disabilities.

As part of Rachel’s person-centered plan,
she made it clear that she wanted to go
to college like her friends. So, like other
students dreaming of college, we visited
different programs. The program Rachel
decided to attend is the Missouri State
had confirmed through case managers
and care managers that Rachel would be
able to use her waiver services for these
supports even if the college is out of
state.

We found several students who would be
helping provide support and submitted
paperwork to the Fiscal Management
Service (FMS) we were working with and
about a month before time to go to
college, we hit a snag. Seems like there
is some tax issue and not every FMS is
able to administer what we needed. I was
nearly panic stricken as we had a very
short amount of time to find a new FMS
agency and get all the paperwork
resubmitted.

Rachel’s case manager, care manager,
and people up the chain of command all
jumped into action. Our case manager
identified two other FMS providers who
could manage what we needed. I quickly
spoke to a few other families and we
chose Independence, Inc. We have been

Bear POWER program in Springfield, MO. There are multiple reasons for her choice. The program is inclusive. She takes some typical classes, some classes with other students in her program where they work on things like resumes and job interviews, she accesses speech language clinic services, and she has the opportunity to participate in an internship each semester. While Rachel has many interests, she decided the theater and hospitality would give her the training to prepare her to do many things. While the program provides some supports, our family and Rachel's circle believed she needed a little more support, specifically in the area of independent living. Long before she chose a college, we so pleased. Alisa Snyder, Independence, Inc. Business and FMS Payroll Manager, is the person we have contact with with most of the time and her customer service skills are amazing. She went above and beyond to help make everything happen quickly and pretty seamlessly. We’ve had some technological bumps, and she has worked with me and Rachel’s personal care assistants to work through these issues. She promptly responds to requests and has really turned what could have been a disaster into a winning situation.

We are thankful that we found Independence Inc. and appreciate the supports Rachel receives so she can live the life she chooses. Rachel says, “I love being a college girl. It makes my heart happy to go to Missouri State University and live my dreams.”

Disability Mentoring Day 2019 Recap: A Great Day of Work Exploration, Mentoring for Area Students

Disability Mentoring Day is a nationwide effort to promote job readiness and career development for high school students with disabilities. Independence, Inc. holds an annual DMD event in October where area high school students are matched with business mentors to provide a morning of job-exploration and hands-on experience in a career field of their choice. This year, we matched nearly 100 students with mentors for a morning of job shadowing then hosted a banquet to come together with the students, mentors, school staff and community partners to celebrate the efforts of everyone involved. Independence, Inc. Board Member, Craig Weinaug was the MC and Peter Steimle, Workforce Services Professional, gave an informative and motivational keynote presentation on being the best “YOU” you can be, in the workplace and beyond. Our theme this year was "Dream Big, Start Small...Every Step Counts!"

What's on the horizon for DMD and Independence, Inc.? We have a team of innovators working together as we partner with area high schools and business partners to look at what changes, if any, we can make to ensure that Disability Mentoring Day is a meaningful, impactful experience with measurable and positive outcomes for our students. As we move into 2020, we will explore expanding mentoring opportunities throughout the year, engaging more business partners and creating a program that truly lives up to the mission of readying transition age students with disabilities for future success in employment.

Independence, Inc.
Granted City Funds to Expand Accessible Housing Program
Our Accessibility Housing Program (AHP) is expanding this fiscal year thanks to a 2019 grant from the City of Lawrence Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HTF). Our HTF program is open to homeowners and renters alike, who need accessibility modifications to their home. For more information or to see if you qualify, contact Amy Ballinger:
785-841-0333
aballinger@independenceinc.org

(Reposted from our summer newsletter as the survey is still open and in need of participants)

The Southwest ADA Regional Center is conducting a survey to investigate the impact of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA Impact 2020 Survey is open to people with personal and/or professional experience in disability issues. The information gathered will be used to understand what aspects of society have become more accessible due to the ADA; understand what areas still require further investigation and proposed solutions; and develop and improve the information, support, and guidance needed to help further the goals of the ADA. The survey results will be announced prior to the ADA 30th anniversary in 2020. It's important to have results that represent people with every type of disability, from every subset of the population, and from all regions of the country.

Begin Survey Now

Independence, Inc. Receives Nearly $18k Kansas Health Foundation Capacity Building Grant for Technology Updates

Independence, Inc. received a much-anticipated $17,872.00 Capacity Building Grant from the Kansas Health Foundation of Wichita, Kansas for needed technology updates including new staff computers, a move to a cloud-based server and a website re-design. December 17th, our office staff made the switch to the new computers and new server and over the next couple of months, we will begin building our new, fully-accessible website. We couldn't be more excited!
The Kansas Health Foundation is a philanthropy dedicated to improving the health of all Kansans. For more information about the Kansas Health Foundation, visit www.kansashealth.org
An Important Win for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities: Harvard Web Captioning Class-Action Settlement Underway

The Harvard Extension School reached a settlement in late November in a 4-year legal battle brought about by the National Association of the Deaf. The lawsuit alleged that the University failed to adequately caption its publicly accessible online video and audio content. Captioning for content such as podcasts and online lectures the lawsuit claims, were either not captioned at all or captioned inadequately, resulting in unintelligible content. The lawsuit also alleged that the University failed to meet its obligations under the 1973 United States Rehabilitation Act, to provide people with disabilities equal access to their programs and activities.

The University must now pay close attention to its online content, making accessibility of their website and other media platforms, top priority. For the official Notice of Proposed Settlement of Class Action Lawsuit, visit https://harvardcaptioningsettlement.com/. If you are deaf or hard of hearing and have tried to access or would like to access Harvard’s online video content with captions or to access Harvard’s online audio content with a transcript, you may be a member of the proposed Settlement Class affected by this lawsuit.

What is a Center for Independent Living and how can YOU be involved?

Centers for Independent Living are community-based, cross-disability, nonprofit organizations that are designed and operated by people with disabilities. As a center for independent living, Independence, Inc. works with and advocates for people with various disabilities to live in the environments of their choice. We offer options, resources and advocacy to help people live fulfilling lives. Our vision is to work together in transforming our communities to be the best places in which people with disabilities can live, learn, and work.

Our daily work consists of advocacy on behalf of individuals and the community, independent living skills training, financial management and personal care service worker support, information and referral, home modifications and housing services, durable medical equipment lending, youth employment support and so much more!

For information on any of these opportunities, visit http://www.independenceinc.org/volunteer/

Or contact Amy Ballinger 785-841-0333 ext. 119 aballinger@independenceinc.org

VISIT OUR WEBSITE
Thank you!

Happy holidays and best wishes for a wonderful and prosperous new year!

From all of us at Independence, Inc.