STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
Holiday Inn Express and Suites, Minot and Virtual
August 6-7, 2026

Call to Order
Brittney Hogan called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. A quorum was present.

Roll Call
Members Present: Warren Granfor, Robyn Soiseth, Leon Dietrich, Brittney Hogan, Scott Burlingame, McKenna Thrush, Shannon Bozovsky, Angie Bosch, Ben Wolf Necklace, Chelsy Sondrol,
Members Absent: Peter Yung, Ali Brown, Lisa Hermosillo, Joe Yasenchack, Gillian Plenty Chief
Non-Council Members Present: Aimee Volk, Stephanie Bouche

Approval of the August 2026 Agenda
Scott Burlingame made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, Warren Granfor seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Approval of May 2026 Minutes
Robyn Soiseth made a motion to approve the May 2026 SILC minutes as presented, McKenna Thrush seconded the motion. Motion passed by unanimous vote.

Correspondence – Brittney Hogan
The Program Performance Report (PPR) for FFY 2025 was approved.

We joined National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and dues were paid.

Treasurer's Report – Aimee Volk
Reviewed the Treasurer's Report.

Leon Dietrich made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented, Robyn Soiseth seconded the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

APRIL Conference is set for October 23-25, 2026, in Niagara Falls, NY. Early bird rates go through August 23 so if you are interested, please let me know.

Vote on 2027 SILC Meeting Dates – Brittney Hogan
Discussion was held on having a joint meeting with the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) February of 2027. The council agreed to hold the meeting the first Thursday and Friday of February, May, August, and November. On the first day of the meeting, it would start at 1:00 pm Central Time and end at 5:00 pm. On the second day of the meeting, it would start at 9:00 am and go until noon unless otherwise noted.

- Joint Meeting the SRC February 4, 2027, 12-5:00 p.m. and SILC February 5, 2027, 9:00 am – 12:00 pm, Bismarck.
- May 6-7, 2027 – Grand Forks, ND

- August 5-6, 2027 – Minot, ND
- November 4-5, 2027 – Fargo, ND

McKenna Thrush made a motion to accept the 2027 SILC meeting dates and times as above, seconded Robyn Soiseth the motion to approve. Motion passed by unanimous decision.

Needs Assessment Survey Analysis – Aimee Volk
A PowerPoint presentation was given and a summary was given. There were 90 Client-Consumer Surveys and 90 Family, Friend, and Provider surveys returned. The CCS 52.6% identified as an consumers, 92% are a person with a disability, and 56.8% effects of aging. The most common disability: was physical at 59% followed by mental and emotional at 46%. 24% are currently employed. The identified barriers were cost at 40% and transportation at 39%. On the Family, Friend and Provider survey transportation was the main barrier was transportation at 71%. Responses were discussed with the council so they can use this information to draft objectives and indicators for the next State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

Committee Breakout Session

2027 Legislative Session Preview and Discussion – Representative Jon Nelson, Representative Scott Louser, and Representative Matthew Ruby

Representative Scott Louser serves on the education committee. Representative Matthew Ruby is the Chair of the Human Services Committee. After the next session there will be a lot of people that will be leaving due to term limit. Top issues are going to be the property tax issues that were passed last session. Rep. Louser is drafting a bill to move all school district employees that have a health plan into the NDPERS health plan.

For budget reviews and priorities what was the effectiveness of the dollars from last session and what is needed, what will be done with those dollars, return on the investment, etc. Rep. Ruby stated he likes to hear the data versus a success story whereas Rep. Louser stated he wants the real-life examples.

They stated that personal notes are effective. They stated that emails during session are hard to respond to. Block emails that are not personal are also ineffective.

If there was a bill that we would like to have sponsored is not a formal process.

Friday, August 7, 2026

Call to Order
Brittney Hogan called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. A quorum was present.

Roll Call
Members Present: Scott Burlingame, Brittney Hogan, Leon Dietrich, McKenna Thrush, Robyn Soiseth, Warren Granfor, Shannon Bozovsky, Angie Bosch, Chelsy Sondrol
Members Absent: Ali Brown, Lisa Hermosillo, Gillian Plenty Chief, Ben Wolf Necklace, Joe Yasenchack, Peter Yung
Non-Committee Members: Aimee Volk

Adulting 101 – Houlden Boully and Mistie Clementich
Cancelled

Home and Community Based Services in Intellectual and Developmental Disability Populations – Brittney Hogan
Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) was explained and the services available. There are more demand and less workforce. 88% of providers report staffing shortages and 62% are turning away referrals due to staffing shortages. The average direct service provider (DSP) wage is $18.52 per hour. The challenges are low compensation, burnout and staffing shortages. There are less staff, which equals reduced capacity, leading to longer waits and fewer choices. When systems are understaffed, families become the backup workforce. Rising costs are contributed to increased wages, insurance, transportation, training, compliance, licensing, and technology. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has indicated it will not rely on prior Olmstead guidance and plans to revisit guidance. The main risks are federal uncertainty, enforcement questions, provider instability, community integration risk, moratorium on new developmental disabilities (DD) providers for the next two years, and proposed licensing changes. This matters because every gap in HCBS becomes a challenge that reaches a Center for Independent Living. We need to look at workforce investment, competitive reimbursement, reduced burden, provider stability, partnership, and community integration.

Quarterly Director's Report:

Angie for Freedom: See attached.

Royce for Dakota Center for Independent Living: No report.

Scott for Independence, Inc.: See attached.

Randy for Options: See attached.

Committee Reports

Governance Committee – Aimee Volk: There is one at-large opening.
Internal Affairs – Chelsy Sondrol: They have created a survey for presenters and that has been completed. Thank you cards have been completed. They are planning to do an insert with a QR code.
External Affairs – Angie Bosch: They will continue ongoing communications with legislators. They are planning on asking for additional dollars for independent living.

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Warren Granfor

Vocational Rehabilitation has asked for additional staff. The VR budget was presented in June. The Tribal VR is moving to the Department of Interior. VR and Tribal VR would be housed differently.

Committee on Aging – Royce Schultze
No report.

TBI Advisory Council – Aimee Volk
Had an in-person meeting. Looking at revising the bylaws and looking at what might be forthcoming at the next session.

NASILC
No report.

Public Comment
Leon passed around a couple of fliers.

The next SILC meeting will be on November 5-6, 2026, in Fargo, ND, and will have the virtual option.

Warren Granfor made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Robyn Soiseth seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Freedom Resource Center for Independent Living Directors Report

Over the past several months, the Freedom Resource Center team has been busy providing services, building community partnerships, expanding programming, and working on accessibility issues throughout our North Dakota service area. We have had some great opportunities to see the impact of our work, both with individual consumers and at the community level.

Consumer Impact

One of the stories we recently shared was Robert's. Robert came to Freedom at a time when he and his family were facing the possibility of homelessness. He was trying to find housing that would meet his accessibility needs while also managing the challenges that came with his disabilities.

Our staff worked alongside Robert to identify the barriers he was facing and determine what steps he wanted to take next. His family was able to find housing that better met his needs, and our team continued to help him connect with resources, problem solve, and work toward the things that were important to him.

What really stands out about Robert's story is that he talked about feeling listened to and accepted. He shared that through working with Freedom he became more grounded and stable. His story is a great example of the impact our advocates can have through consistent support, advocacy, and follow through.

Systems Advocacy and Accessibility

Our partnership with Hector International Airport continues to be a great example of systems advocacy in our community.

Freedom's relationship with the airport around accessibility goes back more than 20 years. As the airport began planning its current renovation and expansion, our team helped bring people with a variety of disabilities and lived experiences together with airport leadership and the architectural design team.

The group reviewed plans and provided feedback on restroom accessibility, adequate space for attendants, sensory needs, navigation, and other accessibility considerations. The airport has also added a sensory room and an immersive reality room and is working on a mapping application to help travelers who are blind or have low vision navigate the airport. The airport has also adopted the Sunflower Program for travelers who may need additional support.

As the airport project moves closer to completion, we are beginning to see much of that work come to fruition. It has been exciting for our team, and especially for the individuals who shared their lived experiences throughout the process, to see their feedback reflected in the finished spaces and accessibility features. What started as conversations around a table and reviews of architectural plans is becoming something people with disabilities will actually be able to experience and use.

Programs and Community Education

Our staff have continued offering Independent Living Skills classes, Freedom in Action activities, Young Adult Gatherings, and other educational opportunities throughout our North Dakota service area.

In Fargo, Jamestown, Valley City, Wahpeton, and surrounding communities, our team has offered programming around financial skills, community resources, home safety, organization, gardening, advance planning, and other topics based on consumer interests and needs.

Our advocates have also continued providing information and support to individuals and families navigating disability-related services and systems. One recent example was information we shared about the difference between Extended School Year services and traditional summer school. Our advocates are available to help families better understand their options and determine their next steps.

Community Partnerships and Support

Our community partnerships continue to be an important part of Freedom's work.

We had another successful Giving Hearts Day this year and raised $16,408. We are incredibly thankful to everyone who supported Freedom and helped us continue providing services throughout our communities.

We also held our annual Appreciation Luncheon in May. This event gives us an opportunity to recognize individuals, businesses, organizations, advocates, volunteers, and community partners who have made a difference throughout the year.

This year was especially meaningful because we renamed our Accessibility Award the Nate Aalgaard Accessibility Award in honor of our former Executive Director. Nate spent 24 years leading Freedom, and many of the relationships and accessibility efforts he helped establish continue today. Our longstanding partnership with Hector International Airport is a great example of that legacy.

Our Team

We continue to be fortunate to have a team with a wide range of professional knowledge, community connections, and lived experience.

One of our recent staff features highlighted Sarah, one of our Independent Living Advocates. Sarah talked about how her own disabilities influence the way she communicates, researches information, advocates, and connects with consumers. She also gave a pretty accurate description of life as an advocate at Freedom. One day may involve helping someone make a phone call or understand their rights, while another may involve outreach, teaching a class, planning an event, or researching resources for a consumer.

That variety is something our entire team experiences. Our staff are doing the day to day work of building relationships with consumers, responding to changing needs, connecting people with resources, and finding ways to address barriers in our communities.

Looking Ahead

As we move through the rest of 2026, our team will continue providing services, expanding community outreach, offering programming, and looking for opportunities to strengthen partnerships throughout our North Dakota service area.

We are also preparing for the Freedom Resource Fair on September 29 at the Veterans Memorial Arena in West Fargo from 11:30 am -2:00 pm. The Resource Fair gives people with disabilities and their families an opportunity to connect directly with organizations, resources, and information in one place.

It is a great opportunity to connect with people from across the community, learn about available resources, meet other organizations, and spend some time with the Freedom team. We hope you can join us on September 29.

August 2026 Independence Director's Report – Scott Burlingame, Executive Director

Successes

A 34-year-old woman came to Independence, Inc. after years of struggling to maintain stable employment. Although she was motivated to work, she found herself cycling through low-paying jobs with limited hours, few benefits, and little opportunity for advancement. The lack of financial stability left her discouraged and uncertain about her future.

Through individualized support, she strengthened her job readiness skills, updated her resume, prepared for interviews, and focused on pursuing employment that aligned with her long-term goals. Her persistence resulted in accepting a full-time position that provides a livable wage, health insurance, paid time off, and opportunities for career growth.

This achievement has significantly improved her financial stability and overall well-being. She reports feeling more confident, less stressed about finances, and optimistic about the future. With stable employment, she is now able to meet her monthly expenses, save for future goals, and enjoy greater independence.

A couple recently relocated to North Dakota from California with very limited resources and significant barriers to stability. They inherited a home that was unsafe to live in because of mold, broken pipes, and other major structural issues. Both individuals also have disabilities that make understanding complex information difficult, creating additional challenges as they attempted to establish themselves in a new community.

Independence, Inc. worked closely with the couple to connect them with furniture and food resources, assist with Medicaid and SNAP applications, and help identify transportation resources for ongoing medical appointments. Staff also provided advocacy throughout the benefits process to ensure they could access needed healthcare and supports.

As a result of these efforts, the couple achieved greater stability and their Adult Protective Services case was successfully closed. The woman obtained Medicaid and CHAMPVA coverage, allowing her to access critical heart medications. She also began seeking employment and secured a job interview, creating new opportunities to improve the family's long-term financial stability.

A 76-year-old woman who had lived in a nursing facility for more than five years wanted to return to living in the community but faced numerous barriers. She had no state identification, no Social Security card, limited income, and had previously experienced financial exploitation by family members. Outstanding fines also prevented her from qualifying for housing.

Independence, Inc. advocated on her behalf to obtain a state identification card, tribal identification, and a replacement Social Security card. Staff also assisted her in working with the Social Security Administration to secure survivor benefits, providing her with the financial resources needed to resolve outstanding fines that had been preventing her from accessing housing opportunities.

With these barriers removed, she is now actively applying for apartments and working with staff to identify caregiver supports that will allow her to safely transition back into the community. She continues to move closer to achieving her long-term goal of living independently.

A woman working with Independence, Inc. identified a simple but meaningful goal of finding shoes that fit comfortably. Ill-fitting footwear had limited her mobility and prevented her from comfortably traveling to visit her brother.

Through Peer Support Services, she obtained properly fitting shoes, improving both her comfort and mobility. This achievement made it possible for her to visit her brother, fulfilling an important personal goal and strengthening an important family relationship.

A man receiving services through Independence, Inc. faced several barriers that affected his overall health and stability. Transportation issues, limited community involvement, and unmet healthcare needs created obstacles to achieving his personal goals.

With continued support and encouragement, he successfully scheduled needed medical appointments, became more socially engaged, and repaired his truck, which had previously limited his independence. These accomplishments improved his access to healthcare, increased his community participation, and strengthened his overall stability.

A man came to Independence, Inc. with a goal of obtaining his North Dakota driver's license. Because of his disability, this goal required additional preparation, practice, and support to build the knowledge and confidence needed to succeed.

Staff worked closely with him by reviewing the North Dakota driver's license manual, completing practice quizzes, and reinforcing test material throughout the learning process. He remained committed despite the challenges he encountered and consistently demonstrated determination to reach his goal.

He successfully earned his North Dakota driver's license and later purchased his own vehicle, greatly increasing his independence and ability to access employment, services, and community activities. Having achieved his primary goal, he successfully completed services with Independence, Inc.

A man came to Independence, Inc. after experiencing years of homelessness while also living with a disability that requires the use of a wheelchair. His housing was inaccessible, making it difficult to safely complete daily activities and maintain his independence.

Through ongoing advocacy, coordination, and peer support, Independence, Inc. helped him obtain safe, stable, wheelchair-accessible housing. Staff also connected him with Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), providing daily in-home supports that assist with personal care, household tasks, and maintaining his independence.

Beyond improvements in housing, he has demonstrated meaningful personal growth by becoming more willing to accept assistance, building trusting relationships with his support team, and continuing to work toward greater independence and an improved quality of life.

A man with disabilities affecting both mobility and memory was experiencing frequent falls and difficulty managing his medications safely. These challenges created ongoing safety concerns within his home.

Independence, Inc. assisted him in obtaining assistive technology through the Transition and Diversion Program (TDP), including grab bars, a blood pressure monitor, and a medication reminder device. These supports improved his safety, promoted greater independence, and helped him better manage his daily health needs.

His Qualified Service Provider shared that he felt valued and encouraged after receiving these supports, expressing gratitude for knowing that help was available. He also continues to participate in Peer Support Services, which has helped reduce feelings of loneliness and provided meaningful social connection.

Barriers

A woman working with Independence, Inc. expressed a goal of relocating to a larger city to improve her opportunities and quality of life. During the initial assessment, staff identified significant barriers that limited her ability to secure housing. Her limited financial resources and desire to relocate with multiple small pets greatly reduced the number of affordable housing options available to her.

Independence, Inc. continues to work with her to explore available resources and identify housing opportunities that can accommodate both her financial situation and her pets. While progress has been made, these factors continue to present significant obstacles to achieving her housing goals.

The Money Follows the Person (MFP) program has encountered increasing barriers as some nursing homes and physicians have become unwilling to participate in community transition efforts. In several cases, physicians have opposed consumers returning to the community despite their eligibility for the program.

Independence, Inc. met directly with one physician in Williston to provide education about the MFP program, but the physician remained opposed to the consumer's discharge. Staff also collaborated with the state MFP program to address similar concerns involving additional nursing homes under the same physician's oversight.

These barriers have resulted in nursing homes refusing to discharge eligible individuals, informing consumers they would be considered discharged against medical advice and would not be readmitted for future skilled care if needed. In some cases, physicians have also refused to provide discharge orders for durable medical equipment or medications, creating additional obstacles that delay or prevent successful community transitions.

A 76-year-old woman needed to obtain a replacement Social Security card and state identification to move forward with important services and benefits. Without support from either her family or the nursing home's social worker, she faced significant challenges navigating the process independently.

Independence, Inc. advocated on her behalf by helping schedule appointments, complete required applications, and identify financial resources to cover associated costs. Although progress was made, the lack of available support within the nursing facility created unnecessary delays and additional barriers to her ability to pursue independent living.

A woman successfully returned to her apartment with support from Independence, Inc., which included purchasing items to improve her daily living and coordinating 24-hour care services. Over

the following months, however, her health declined as she consistently refused to participate in recommended exercises and spent nearly all of her time in a recliner. Her declining mobility and increasing care needs made it impossible for caregivers to safely meet her personal care needs within the home.

As her condition worsened, she gained a significant amount of weight and experienced a fall that required eight individuals to safely assist her into bed. She was subsequently hospitalized and later readmitted to a nursing facility. Because her care needs exceeded what could safely be provided in the community, Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) determined they could no longer support a community placement, and her participation in the Money Follows the Person program was placed on hold until her condition improves enough to allow safe care by a single caregiver in the home.

Youth Camp

The Youth Camp was a six-week Independent Living Skills program for youth with disabilities ages 14 to 21. Twenty-one youth registered for the program, with weekly attendance ranging from three to thirteen participants. The curriculum focused on practical independent living skills including meal preparation, kitchen safety, social communication, woodworking, tool safety, basic vehicle maintenance, home management, budgeting, laundry, and household organization. Participants also developed confidence through group activities, games, and opportunities to build meaningful peer relationships. Feedback from participants showed they valued learning new skills, making friends, and participating in hands-on activities, while staff identified opportunities to further refine future programming based on participant interests and engagement.

These youth programs reflect Independence, Inc.'s commitment to preparing the next generation for greater independence while fostering a more inclusive community. By combining disability awareness, practical life skills, and opportunities for social connection, the camps helped participants build confidence, strengthen relationships, and develop skills that will support success both at home and in the community.

Pantry to Plate: Building Confidence One Meal at a Time

This spring, Independence, Inc. partnered with Community Action Partnership to offer Pantry to Plate, a free hands-on cooking class designed to build confidence, independence, and practical life skills. The program focused on teaching participants how to prepare healthy, affordable meals using common pantry staples while making the most of available food resources.

During the class, participants prepared several nutritious recipes featuring canned chicken, demonstrating that affordable ingredients can be transformed into satisfying, healthy meals with a little creativity. In addition to learning practical cooking techniques, participants received recipes to take home and gained the confidence to prepare meals for themselves and their families.

Community Action Partnership provided food boxes and ingredients, allowing participants to recreate the recipes at home and continue practicing the skills they learned. By combining nutrition education, budgeting strategies, and hands-on instruction, the program equipped participants with practical tools to make healthy choices while maximizing their grocery budgets.

Programs like Pantry to Plate demonstrate that independence is often built through e

Community Services

The Big Dig: Building Inclusion Through Play and Learning

This summer, Independence, Inc. hosted The Big Dig, a four-day inclusive summer camp that brought children with and without disabilities together to learn, play, and build friendships. The camp focused on disability awareness, inclusion, and creating opportunities for children to experience their community alongside one another in a welcoming and supportive environment.

Throughout the week, campers participated in hands-on activities including an accessibility walk, creative art projects, movement activities, cooking, and team-building exercises. These experiences encouraged meaningful conversations about disability while helping children recognize that everyone has unique abilities, strengths, and perspectives to contribute.

The Big Dig demonstrated the value of inclusive experiences at an early age. By creating opportunities for children to learn from one another, the program fostered understanding, reduced stigma, and helped build friendships that crossed traditional barriers. The camp also highlighted the impact that can be achieved when nonprofit organizations, businesses, volunteers, and community partners work together to create a more inclusive community.

Municipal Candidate Forum

This spring, Independence, Inc. partnered with the Alliance of Nonprofits and the Minot Area Council of the Arts to host a candidate forum in advance of the Minot municipal election. The event provided community members with the opportunity to hear directly from candidates for mayor and city council, ask questions from a nonprofit and community perspective, and learn more about the issues affecting the future of Minot. Scott Burlingame, Executive Director of Independence, Inc., served as moderator, facilitating the discussion and ensuring each candidate had an equal opportunity to share their views.

Providing access to unbiased information and opportunities for civic engagement is an important part of building an inclusive community. By creating a forum where residents could interact directly with candidates and make informed decisions, the event supported greater accessibility to the democratic process and encouraged meaningful community participation.

The candidate forum also highlighted the value of collaboration among local organizations. Through the partnership between Independence, Inc., the Alliance of Nonprofits, and the Minot Area Council of the Arts, the event created a welcoming environment for respectful dialogue and reinforced the importance of working together to strengthen the community.

Options Executive Directors Report - August 2026

Options has announced the opening of Applications for the 31st Annual Deer Hunt to be held Oct.15-17th for persons with disabilities. The hunt provides hunters with disabilities blinds to hunt from at Rydell National Wildlife Refuge. People can hunt independently, bring an associate with them, or use volunteers associated with the Hunt. The hunt spans three days with hunting open each afternoon from noon to the end of legal hunting time. Persons are responsible for getting to the hunt, their own lodging, weapons, ammo, and licensing. Out of State Deer Hunting licenses are $185.00 dollars. If a person does not bag a deer during the hunt they can hunt one of the regular open season times Minnesota has in November. Anyone interested in hunting or volunteering please reach out to Heather at Options for applications (800) 726-3692.

Options will be holding the second hunting opportunity along the Greenway of East Grand Forks for archery hunters. Four spots are available for hunters with disabilities with preference given to East Grand Forks hunters with disabilities, and to fulfill two spaces for Vets. The hunt will be held the second week of October a Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Last year no residents of East Grand Forks applied and only two of the four spaces filled. Options will assist hunters to their stand area and help them with set-up, recovering any deer taken, and getting the animal to their vehicle. Please contact Randy for applications and information (800) 726-3692.

Options Board of Directors has initiated discussions on fulfilling the Executive Director Position when the current Director retires March 2027. Some discussions have been held on brainstorming methodologies including the use of headhunters and national advertising. It is hoped a person with managerial experience in Independent Living is found and lived experience with a disability.

Though Options had cannibalized its Cavalier staff person in order to offer employees health insurance a couple years ago it had not shut down the office the FTE used. The rent was not very expensive so Options wanted to assess if the location would be beneficial to staff visiting with consumers in the future. Since this has not been the case Options has decided to terminate renting the location. In order to shut it down Options will have a large amount of office equipment to dispose of, if any not for profits are interested in viewing some pictures to assess whether they would like any of them please contact Randy for pictures. We would like to have the Office emptied out by the end of November. We have additional Office equipment located in Roseau Minnesota another Office we are closing.

Options was part of a community event, First Night Out in Grand Forks with a record number of people stopping by our Booth. Over 100 people stopped by to ask questions and get information about equipment, accessibility, and independent living services.

Options assisted three facilities to improve their accessibility by providing accessibility evaluations that identifies problem areas where improvements can be made. One was a private not for profit, the other a church and lastly a nursing facility. In addition to the organization Options assisted eight individuals with accessibility. Options assists people through an evaluation of their home, provision of a report describing remedies, and if the individual would like one on one help in attaining the changes necessary to enable them to remain in their home.

An individual successfully utilized Options' Independent Living services and the transition and diversion program grant to identify personal goals, overcome barriers, and transition into a more accessible living environment that better supports their independence. At the beginning of services, the individual identified goals related to obtaining accessible housing, exploring assistive communication technology, and receiving support with coordinating a move.

The individual worked with the Options team to navigate the housing search process by gathering required documentation and communicating housing preferences. The individual identified the need for a more accessible apartment with features that would better accommodate daily living needs and provide additional space for personal interests. With support from the transition coordinator and outside housing facilitator, the individual explored available housing options and eventually identified a desired housing location in which to relocate to in a different community. The individual became increasingly involved in the process by attending apartment viewings and participating in discussions regarding future housing goals.

The individual also advocated for improved communication access due to challenges related to hearing. The individual expressed difficulty participating in group environments and identified a need for assistive technology that could improve communication and participation. Options staff assisted with exploring available resources through assistive technology providers and worked with the individual to identify possible solutions that would better meet their communication needs through ND Assistive.

The individual successfully completed a move to a new community with support from Options staff, transition coordinators, and housing partners. During the move, unexpected transportation barriers occurred; however, the support team collaborated quickly to secure alternative arrangements and ensure the individual was able to arrive safely at the new residence. The individual’s belongings were successfully transported, and services were transitioned to a new support team to maintain continuity.

Staff assisted a 34-year-old consumer with autism in exploring his interests and employment goals. The consumer decided he wanted to earn his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) to pursue a career as a truck driver. Staff connected him with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources and helped secure funding for his CDL training, lodging, and meals during the three-week program in Bismarck. Through determination and perseverance, he passed both the written and driving exams on his third attempt and is now one step closer to achieving his career goals.

Options has a staff person who is Native American who has been part of a planning committee in developing a guide on how to bring Independent Living Services into Indian Country. The report will address outreach to populations living on the Reservation and off the Reservation. The Report is in the process of being finalized and was coordinated through the Independent Living Technical Assistance Center and ACL.