



STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

October 22, 2025

2:30pm

Advocacy Committee Meeting

ZOOM

Members Attending: Committee Chair Andrew Harmon, Jennifer Cook, Ryan Donnelly, Joshua Gehling, and Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre

Staff: Jennifer Beaulieu (SILC Assistant)

Guests: Kristin Venator (Program Specialist, VR), Herbert Carpenter (Applicant), and Danielle Murphy (WellSense Health Plan).

Committee Chair Andrew Harmon called the meeting to order at 2:40pm.

Presentation on Benefits Counseling

Kristin Venator introduced herself as the Program Specialist for VR regarding benefits counseling. She gave a presentation on VR's benefits counseling services. For more detailed information on the presentation, see attached PowerPoint slides.

She mentioned how twice a month she has two workshops. One is in the morning, while the other is in the afternoon. It's an introduction on how work impacts benefits. The workshops are open to the public. She noted that every quarter, she has one specifically for transition-age youth. She promotes those workshops to schools so parents, teachers, guardians, and other staff can learn about how work impacts benefits. With transition-age youth, the discussion is all about what they are going to do after they graduate high school. If they enter the workforce, they need to know how that work will impact on their benefits.

Andrew Harmon asked what the youngest age is when a person can receive VR services. He knows people can work under age 18 with parental consent in certain situations. She responded that VR has a transition office that focuses on transition-age youth. She believes that the youngest age to be able to receive services is at age 14. A lot of transition-age VR participants are interested in trying work. She mentioned how with transition-age youth, it is usually the parents or guardians who are worried about their child losing their SSI or SSDI benefits because it pays for the child's needs. The work incentives for individuals under the age of 22 on SSI where basically they're earning threshold is so much higher than anybody else on SSI. Parents and Guardians have no idea that their child could try employment almost full-time like during

the summer and not lose their benefits at all. That's why she has workshops specifically for transition-age youth.

Sarah Sweeney mentioned how state and federal benefits have different income limitations and work incentives. For example, a person could be receiving personal care attendant services through the state and get SSDI which is a federal benefit. Someone could be eligible to receive work incentives for SSDI but if they start working they could lose their state benefits because they earned too much. She related the matter to her own personal situation of potentially losing personal care services if she were to get a job. Kristin Venator mentioned how this is why benefits counseling is important because they go through all the benefits the individual receives and informs them how work may impact their benefits. She noted that she can talk more about Sarah Sweeney's situation offline. Sarah Sweeney noted how the information she gets is often inconsistent. Kristin Venator agreed. She gets inconsistent answers from the Social Security Administration as well. She often looks at the program operation manual for answers to her questions.

Jennifer Cook mentioned that she applauds her efforts on getting the information out about benefits. She mentioned how she has been working in the field for a long time, and she still hears misinformation from VR counselors and agencies. They tell people they can only earn this much, or they can't work more than this number of hours. Everyone gets so limited, and this affects all the choices they make down the road. Kristin Venator mentioned that part of her job is to educate VR counselors about benefits. They wouldn't provide benefits counseling, but they should include benefits counseling in a VR participant's plan if they receive benefits. She noted how they have different vendors that provide benefits counseling, and they are in the process of making sure participants get similar services no matter from the vendors. Regarding SSI benefits, Jennifer Cook noted that you must earn a significant amount of money before it actually impacts your benefits. For example, you have someone whose goal is to work 10 hours a week, it's very unlikely that their benefits are going to be impacted one way or another. They could probably make 20 bucks an hour and it's not a big deal.

Review of September 24th and 30th

***Committee Chair Andrew Harmon made a motion that we accept the September 24th minutes.**

Second: Joshua Gehling

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

***Joshua Gehling moved that we accept the 30th minutes.**

Second: Ryan Donnelly

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

Jennifer Cook mentioned that it would be helpful to include what SPIL objectives are being addressed with the presentations. Andrew Harmon noted that all the presentations that occurred were on Objective 4.3, but he will do a better job of making it clearer on the agenda.

Discussion regarding Upcoming Committee Dates for November and December

Andrew Harmon mentioned how their next two scheduled meetings fall close to Thanksgiving and Christmas. The meeting in November will be held on November 26th, the day before Thanksgiving. The meeting in December will be on Christmas Eve. Discussion ensued. It was decided that we would meet as scheduled in November but the meeting for December was changed to December 17th.

Committee Chair Andrew Harmon mentioned that he would entertain a motion to change the meeting to the [December] 17th.

Second: Sarah Sweeney

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

SPIL Goals and Objectives Updates

Goal 1 Objectives/211 Discussion

Andrew Harmon moved on to talk about the Goal 1 Objectives. The first objective is about getting a list of disability organizations in the state. Sarah Sweeney mentioned that she had been talking with Ericia at 211 but was unaware she was asking her for a list of different disability agencies. Andrew Harmon mentioned that it has been a little while since the objectives were reviewed. He also mentioned that they won't be able to get anywhere with those objectives until we have a firm idea about what is out there for the different agencies. Discussion ensued on what the objective was looking for. Were we asking 211 for a list of disability agencies? Would it be more effective to ask 211 what gaps they see? Andrew Harmon tabled the discussion due to time constraints.

Objective 4.3

Regarding this objective, a presenter has already been chosen for the next meeting. The presenter is an Area Agency Benefits Specialist at Community Crossroads.

Goal 5 Objectives

Andrew Harmon tabled the discussion on these objectives due to time constraints.

Legislative Discussions

Andrew Harmon asked Mo Baxley and Ryan Donnelly if there is anything coming up from the legislature for the state that we should be aware of. Mo Baxley noted that as of that morning, the LSRs don't yet have language added to it. There are only titles. She mentioned how ABLE NH is working with Tim Harrigan to sponsor legislation to make 1% of all new housing follow universal design standards. Language will be added to the LSRs in the next couple of weeks.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he thought HB60 was Inexpedient to Legislate, but he saw something on WMUR where a bunch of housing advocates brought up the ability of landlords to evict based on just the housing lease. Ryan Donnelly mentioned that HB60 passed and was signed by the Governor. Andrew Harmon asked if they knew of any LSRs that would reverse the effects of HB60. Ryan Donnelly noted that from the top of his head, he doesn't know of any, at least from the titles.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he got his bills confused at the last meeting which was about restricting the right to get absentee ballots without a color copied photo ID. That particular piece didn't make it through the passed bill.

Adjournment

*Sarah Sweeney moved to adjourn.

Second: Ryan Donnelly

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstaining:** None

Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 3:32pm.

Minutes Recorded by Jennifer Beaulieu.