ROUGHLY EDITED TRANSCRIPT

ASSOCIATION OF PROGRAMS FOR RURAL INDEPENDENT LIVING (APRIL)

STAFF RETENTION: INVESTING IN YOUR STAFF FOR A STRONGER TOMORROW

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>> MARY OLSON: Hi, folks. Just so you know, we are just getting everything started up. This is our first time using Zoom.

We're just getting things rolling here.

We'll get started in just a few moments. I see some of you filling out our poll. That's awesome! If you can do that, while we're getting going here.

>> MARY OLSON: It's 1:01. I'm just letting stream text going. I apologize to folks, we are having trouble getting the captioning going in the webinar itself. And so we're actually going to be using captioning in our Streamtext link. You can see the link right here, www.streamtext.net. It's that link there. And it's also on the APRIL website, if you are looking for captioning.

We will get going in just a moment here.

Can folks ‑‑ can somebody let me know from the chat if folks can see the PowerPoint behind the polling.

Oh, see there's a chat right now.

Oh, my goodness, I'm like panicking. Now I can't find the chat for the main group. Oh, I can see the PowerPoint. Thank you, Anthony. All right!

Well, let's go ahead and get started then. Thank you, everybody, for joining today, for this amazing call. We are so excited to be continuing our conversation around the future of IL, and today we are specifically talking about staff retention.

If you haven't had a chance yet to fill out our poll, sitting up on the screen, please go ahead and do that now. Since we are talking about the future of IL, and retention of staff, we thought it would be fun to find out how long those of you on the call have been in your current organization.

All right. So it looks like we have quite a few folks and I'm just going to let you guys see who is all here. Can you guys see that?

Excellent.

So it looks like we have a lot of folks here from two to five years, some 10 to 15 and some 16 plus.

That's really exciting and we're going to hopefully hear from you guys on why you stay.

But, first, let's go ahead and take some housekeeping out of the way. Again thank you all and welcome to this IL‑Net sponsored conversation on staff retention.

I wanted to just go over a few things about how to participate in today's call, and I just really appreciate that you all hopefully will kind of help me help you, if you will. This is my first time running a Zoom call, and so as we get going, hopefully things will get a little bit easier, but for today, we are just kind of going to go with the flow.

So for today's call, in order to participate, if you move your cursor around on your screen, a tool bar should pop up, either on the top or the bottom of why you are screen. And the left‑hand side corner ‑‑ on the left‑hand corner of your screen, there will be a microphone to mute and unmute yourself. And then by pressing the chat bubble, there should be a chat bubble as well. You can type a question in from your computer or you can chat with each other which is awesome. If you have official questions, for the folks that are helping us to lead today today's call, I can type it into today's box with a little file folder on it.

And then once we get going here, if you are just using our phone lines or if you are using the phone instead of your computer mic, you can actually unmute and mute with star six.

And then this says captions will be supplied in the webinar platform. I'm sorry I was not able to figure it out that time. We do have the captions available at this link here at Streamtext. If you don't mind actually typing your questions in the Zoom platform ‑‑ oh, look, she says click their name in the participants.

You know what, Linda, I didn't see that option when I did it, but I will definitely get on top of it for next time.

If you are having any trouble at all, with today's call, you can always email me and that's Mary.Olson@mso.umt.edu and then hopefully I will be able to get you squared away at that point.

Oops. Excuse me.

All right!

So we're going to go to the next slide and, again if you are following along from home on the phone, we do have the PowerPoint uploaded on the APRIL website and that's www.APRIL‑rural.org. And you can download it and follow along with us there if you are on the phone.

So, again, this is an IL‑Net sponsored call, and the IL‑Net is a national training and technical assistance project for centers for independent and Statewide Independent Living Councils, the IL‑Net is operated by ILRU in partnership with NCIL, APRIL and Utah State.

We are really excited for staff retention, investing in your staff for a stronger tomorrow. And today, we are lucky to have Brooke and Scott with us. I'm going to tell you just a little bit more about them.

Today's discussion, we're going to really help to cover finding and hiring staff, training and support, building a culture, and clarified expectations, but as with all conversations, we really also want to cover topics that are important to you and hear from you all in the field as to what you guys are doing.

So we kind of like to start with a few guiding discussion questions, just for you guys to think about while we are going through content, so that you can really jump in and participate in the conversation.

Think about how do you recruit staff. How do you decide what you are looking for when you are hiring? How do you create a culture where people want to stay? How does staff bring forth ideas for organizational growth? How does staff know if they are doing a good job? And for those of you, especially since we have such a huge group of folks who have been in IL for a little while, why do you stay at your job?

First I would like to introduce you to Brooke. Brooke is a training and technical assistance specialist at ILRU. Previously she worked in recruiting and managed a staff of 40 in a high‑turnover industry, improved retention through ambassador and mentorship program and staff appreciation and event awards. The franchise was awarded for highest total revenue growth and highest employee growth for locations up to $750,000 in 2017.

She also played a notable role in launching a young professional group and junior board for nonprofit.

Thanks, Brooke. And I want to introduce to you Scott. So Scott is the executive director at Independence Inc. a resource Center for Independent Living in Minot, North Dakota.

Some of you might not know this, but I telecommute to the Alabama office. And I live in Montana. And we always say, why not Minot?

So they have a budget of around $670,000. So Scott is rural. Over 20 years of experience as a supervisor and manager and over the last eight years Independence Inc. has went from 60 to 70% annual turnover to less than 10%.

During that same time, we have increased our consumer caseload by 600%, increased our community profile drastically and positioned ourselves as a leader of local community and systems advocacy.

Oh, we are so lucky to have both Brooke and Scott with us today. And I guess without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to them.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: All right, thanks, Mary. We are super excited to talk about staff retention. As Mary said this is a conversation. So if at any point you do have questions, please use the chat.

But to start it off, I really wanted to share this quote that I really like, and it says "you can't make up for in training what you messed up in hiring." Are.

That was a quote I would commonly hear and I think this is so important when you are talking about staff retention, because really, hiring in the hiring process, is so essential to making sure that you are getting the right individuals in your organization. Okay?

So next slide, please, Mary.

All right. So when we're talking about recruiting and hiring, really the first step is to look at how you are sourcing candidates. So, of course, you can source them internally, so you can have internal candidates. And so this is really great because those candidates, that are familiar with your organization already, and they are aware of your organizational culture, but you can also have outbound candidates. And so a lot of times this will come when you post a job listing. So you might post it on LinkedIn or Indeed or APRIL or ILRU's website. Or you can also recruit candidates or find candidates by going out in the community as well.

And then another aspect that's commonly used are referrals. So you might know someone who works for you who knows someone who is looking for a job, or they are potentially looking to get involved with independent living.

I will caution kind of about the referral program. You don't really want to rely on that too much or you really want to make sure that you have safeguards up in place, just so that you are not hiring someone's friend and you are kind of not doing your due diligence on that person. Okay?

And then also for screening. So I think screening is really important because you have these applicants coming in. You want to make sure that they meet your requirements. Maybe you are looking for a year or two of experience in, I don't know, customer relations or something of that sort. But also before you start screening, you really want to come up with some guidelines for really what you are looking for in the applicant.

Just so that way you are making sure that you are really getting the candidate that you would like.

One thing that I have done previously in my role in recruiting was did I conduct a lot of phone screens and I thought that this was really important, especially in the industry that we worked in, because a lot of the people who we hired, they really had to make a good first impression over the phone.

So for me, using the phone screen was a good indicator if they would be able to do that and communicate and tell me about themselves.

And so, really, when you are thinking about the ‑‑ when you are thinking about the recruiting and hiring process and sourcing and screening candidates, you really want to look at it like a funnel, right? You really want to have a good amount of applicants applying for your openings because if you have two applicants apply, you might not be happy with just those two. So you really want to have a good number of applicants coming in for you to review so that way you feel like you have options and you are not just limited to two applicants, okay?

And then also some other things to consider when you are looking at candidates, it's really easy to just look at those basic requirements and kind of check people off or, you know, just eliminate them, but really, consider some transferable skills. Maybe they are not familiar with independent living, but maybe they have worked in other ‑‑ with other nonprofits and those could be skills that would transfer over to ‑‑ to the role that you are looking to hire for.

Also look at community involvement. I mean, what we do in independent living, we're out in the community. So maybe they do a lot of volunteering or they are just super involved in their community and that's something that's really important. And then also, of course, you want to look at leadership experience. You want to people to come in who want to grow. You want for them to have some form of leadership experience. I think this is super important, especially if you are hiring for a managing role. Okay?

And then also one thing ‑‑ and I'm sure everyone is doing this, but when you are reviewing applications, and we are talking about staff retention, we want the people to stay with us and hang out for quite some time. So really think about how long they are staying at their previous positions.

If they were there for only six months, or if they have, like, two or three job positions where they were there for just six months, really consider how long you think that they will stay with your organization. Okay?

Mary, next slide, please.

Thank you.

And so when we're talking about the interviewing process, you screened your applicants or you have reviewed your resumes, I wanted to give two examples of interview questions. So the first step ‑‑ the first question says what do you think is the most important aspect of management and why? And then the second question says, do you like working with people?

So I want you to think about those questions.

And now I want you to compare them to the second set of questions, which say tell me about a time when you handled a difficult situation. Describe a time when you worked as a team to accomplish a goal. So kind of what are some of the differences that you see here?

Really, the first set is asking more of a direct question. The question is kind of more closed ended, versus the second set, it's kind of behavioral.

And so when you have these behavioral questions, it's going to allow you ‑‑ it's going to be an indicator of how individuals are going to handle difficult situations, how they work in teams. And so really kind of listen to what people tell you in those situations. If you ask about, you know, tell me about a time when you worked as a team, and they said, you know, I worked with a team and I missed half the meetings and I kind of just did my fair share kind of towards the end, that's kind of going to tell you a lot about them. And it might not be someone you want with your organization, because it won't align with your organizational culture.

Versus someone who says, you know, I really enjoy working with teams. I like getting to know people. I think it's really important to know the strengths and weaknesses of everyone on the team so that we can work cohesively together.

Next slide, please.

I'm sorry, Scott, do you want to add something in there?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: No, you are doing wonderful.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: All right. I think I'm going to pass this off to you, Scott.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: So just to talk a little bit about some of the best practices in hiring. You know, one of the things that we really talked about is kind of your culture around hiring and how do you go about making decisions and Brooke, used that quote, don't think you can fix in training the mistakes you made in hiring. And I think that a lot of what you want to do is really be careful and take your time and do your due diligence in the process of hiring and it can become frustrating, because we all understand, we have all been short staffed. We all had those situations where there's work not being done because employees aren't there. There's contracts that aren't able to be met because there's nobody to fill that need or there's people that we are trying to serve that we can't serve right away or in the way that we want to because there's no consumers involved or there's no staff to serve that.

At the same time, you know, it is option time to leave a spot open than it is to hire the wrong person. And one of the hardest things that we need to do is to become comfortable with that and it's hard, because we're in hiring positions.

It's actually ironic. I had it on my performance review about board members who are concerned about turnover, about open spots and one of the things I really tried to talk to them about, that not all turnover is bad turnover and if you don't find the right person, if you don't hire the right person, that can be really difficult.

One of the lessons that I learned here in Minot, shortly after I got into this job, we had a flood. So about a quarter of our city was under water. And we were right in the middle of an oil boom. We had a shortage of housing because of an oil boom and a shortage of housing for a flood. There were a lot of times when we had a hiring shortage there were two applicants and if they were not the right two applicants, we had to let it go. Don't let your desire to fill a seat override your best judgment. If you is have those little things during the interview process or the hiring process, the hairs that stand up on the back of your net saying this person will not fit into our culture. This person is not going to make it in this environment that we are trying to create and this culture that we are trying to create. Don't hire them.

And ‑‑ because the wrong employee is often more damaging than no employee at all and we have all been there. I'm sure you have had that one person who comes in and drops a bomb of negativity throughout everything that you are trying to accomplish. And it can be really, really hard, you know, maybe more than a bomb, a stink bomb. And once that stink gets throughout your entire business, it's really hard to wash that stink off.

It can take years at times to get rid of that, and so just really take your time in the process of hiring and be unapologetic about it, that we will find the right person.

Go ahead, Mary.

>> MARY OLSON: Next slide?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Yes, sorry.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: So we did want to talk a little bit about training as well. So, you know, you have hired your ideal candidate. They are doing great. They are coming in for orientation, but really just understand that training is really beyond orientation. It should be an ongoing process. We are always learning. And really, a lot of the times, when you do have a new staff member come in, a lot of times, they will have goals and those goals will be, you know to grow professionally, and a lot of the times they really do involve training.

So be sure that you are having some form of, like, a training plan in mind.

I just want to draw attention and point out that, ILRU.org has some great resources. We do have the self‑paced courses, online courses, on location trainings and webinars.

And then some other ideas that we heard when it comes to find of organizations really being creative in regards to training were mentorship. This is great if you have a veteran staff member, who they just have their wealth of knowledge and it's a really good opportunity to partner them with a newer staff member.

And then I think also site visits to other CILs.

One thing that we are seeing is that, you know, we talk a lot about peer mentoring, right? But really, that can extend between centers. So a lot of the times centers are learning a lot more about ‑‑ about services and kind of innovative things that they can be doing from other CILs.

So a site visit might be a good way to just really take a different approach and see how other centers are doing things.

And as I mentioned, creating a training plan. And then also staff competitions. So I heard about one center who are they really wanted to push training among their staff members. So every month they had like a $15 Starbucks card drawing. So if you complete your trainings, your name goes into that drawing and you can win the gift card. How easy is that?

I know Scott really, at his center, he does monthly all‑star meetings. Is it something you want to tell them a little bit more about?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Yeah. Yeah. And we'll talk about that here throughout it, but you are absolutely right. We very much prioritize training. I believe that there's a direct correlation between not only how much training do you provide and how effective are you, but how much training you provide and how much people understand and see the value that you put into them as an organization, because you are consistently investing in them.

And so that might not always necessarily be for the job they currently have. And it takes a certain amount of security as a manager to get comfortable with that, but sometimes you are providing people a training for their next job, or when they see you investing in them, they ‑‑ they ‑‑ you know, human beings have that able or that desire sometimes to appreciate that. I had an experience many years ago ‑‑ and a lot of us have been there. You have a tight budget. And oftentimes one of the first things you want to cut is your training and travel budget because it feels like it's maybe a little bit extra. However, we ‑‑ so we eliminated it at the center I was working at the time and we had massive turnover in the next year. I always felt this was a little bit of correlation there.

When that was reduced, people stopped seeing the value in what you are ‑‑ or how you valued them and you are absolutely right, Brooke, we do have monthly staff meetings and there's ‑‑ with every one of those is at least one, if not two different type of trainings that we bring into it. So ‑‑

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Nice.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: You can go on to the next slide, Mary.

And within those staff meetings, went of the things we try really hard to do is establish a disability‑rights friendly culture within our office and there's the word all here on the side that has a whole bunch of words like pride and inclusion and resources and culture and identity and all of those type of disability rights words that we all know and love.

And so within that, again, going back to these staff meetings is we constantly review disability history, and work to define disability culture. There's a time back here when one of my staff was working with Mary and Sierra from APRIL a little bit and she forgot what ADAPT was. Instantly, we had the history of ADAPT and the history of that movement and what ‑‑ all the good things they have done because I want each and every one of our staff within our organization to really understand and have that deep comprehension of what ‑‑ how we got to who we are.

We really, really get into that, because I heard people ‑‑ I even heard people who left our organization and exit interviews who say this is not the right organization for me anymore, but I loved your commitment to the training and the culture.

One of the things we have been working on is to encourage public displays of disability pride. And what I mean by that is obviously over half of our board and staff and management staff are persons with disabilities, but one of the things that I learned and I have been stealing this a little bit because I have been working with people in recovery from addiction. Being able to talk about what that disability means to them and how they can do that, and being comfortable with saying here's my disability. Here's what it means. And here's my story and to be very proud of that.

And the correlation is when people feel like their disability is seen as an asset to their employment, they again feel like it's a much more comfortable, long‑term rewarding place that they might want to work.

Next is we worked radically to accommodate disabilities. We want to be intentional in how we accommodate. When he talk about accommodations, you know, there's good HR practices that we talked to other employers about to say, hey, if they have a form and they need to request a reasonable accommodation, that they can fill it out and maybe during your performance reviews, you do that.

You offer that again.

But when I talk about radically accommodating, just have constant conversations between management staff and, you know ‑‑ between supervisors and staff about how are you doing with these accommodations? Are we accommodating you in the right ways? Is this other ways that we can accommodate you?

>> And really diving into what is a disability‑related issue that we can accommodate and what is a performance issue or a central function of your job that may or may not be accommodated and in doing that, you are allowed to set high expectations and I'm unapologetic in that we set high expectations. I expect a lot out of the people who come to work here.

I believe that, you know, when we radically accommodate disabilities, even people with some of the most severe disabilities are with the disabilities that most affect their workplace, can find a way to be successful and I often say on a scale of 1 to 10, would 10 being that perfect employee. Maybe they need an accommodation on three of those things but if you can find a way to move things around or change things or figure out some way to accommodate that, it again, becomes that disability rights friendly culture that makes it a place that people want to work and they think, how could I ever want to work anywhere else.

Next slide, Mary.

And now we have a meme and I'm trying to use as many memes as possible. This is the organizational culture and there's a meme from "the office" saying, "if you could certify we have a culture of compliance that would be great." Culture in your organization can be a little bit hard to define and if you have 100 employees, you will get 100 different definitions of what that culture is.

However, I do think you know what your culture of an organization is and I recently heard something that I found to be fascinating and as soon as I heard it, I thought, I will be repeating that for a long time. Within an organization, it takes seven years to establish a culture. That's a pretty long time. I mean, that's ‑‑ and I ‑‑ and then I thought about myself and I realized I had been at my job about eight years at that point and it was really in the last year that we established a culture. So a lot of those seven years was rough. We didn't have low turnover. We didn't have a great workforce that understood our roles and that understood the importance of the disability rights and understood the history of independent living and all of those things. And it was tough!

This was a lot of, a lot of hard times to go through as we were establishing that organizational culture and to be blunt, some of the people that started at the beginning are no longer here, because it wasn't the right place for them. This wasn't the culture that we were trying to set up. It wasn't the culture that was right for them and that's okay. Just as it's wrong for us to expect ‑‑ it's wrong for us to expect somebody to be in our workforce if they aren't interested in being part of our culture.

So next slide, Mary.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Scott, I have a question for you real quick. Can you tell us more about ‑‑ how would you describe your organizational culture?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Yeah, see, again, that's one of those lovely things, Brooke, that as you say it, oh, this is tough.

But we absolutely ‑‑ we have a very, you know, cross‑disability culture within our organization. We try really hard to really live the fact that we don't want to establish a hierarchy amongst different people with disabilities. We have a strong work‑friendly culture that we're not going to sit back ‑‑ and one of the cultures I explained is ‑‑ my joke is ‑‑ complain about being busy at work is like complaining that you are wet in the shower. So rather than complaining how busy you are at work, hey, I'm overwhelmed right now. How can I take personal responsibility and fix this?

We will talk about communication. Very radical communication and a lot of self‑responsibility within the communication is a big part of our culture. And the last thing that I will summarize, we make full‑speed mistakes. If we are going to make mistakes, let's make mistakes because they were mistakes of efforts that we ran into a wall at full speed.

What I mean by that is I don't want to punish people who try something and doesn't work. You will get in trouble if you don't try something and it doesn't ‑‑ I don't like mistakes of laziness, but I appreciate and I support mistakes of effort. If somebody goes out and tries something with somebody and it doesn't work, we'll be like, all right. That's learned. That was a learning moment. Nobody was hurt. But what did we learn from it? And so we very much build a culture around that.

I hope that answers your question, Brooke.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Thanks, Scott.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: A little bit about why people stay. I found this on thebalancemb.com. I established a lot of this list already. So one of the cultural things also that I like to talk about is something that I established early on. Sometimes we spend so much time asking ourselves why did people leave organizations. And you find out things like that person left because they didn't like the work. Or they left because they could make more money somewhere else. Or they left because ‑‑ you know, whatever reason.

And so me, sometimes I felt like that was asking the wrong question. I wanted to ask, why do people stay? When you begin to do that, you can find out what works and how to repeat that. If you have 2 or 3% or 10% of your employees who have been there for a long time, have conversations with them. Why have you stayed in this organization.

If you had someone who was job hopping before and you hired them and now they have been here for three or four years, find out why. What is it about this organization that made them decide?

And, again, that helps to establish what your internal culture. Is one of the most important things here is leadership and planning. And people like and they respect that the organization has a plan. That they know where they are going and when I talked about leadership here, I'm not talking about hard core management. I'm not talking about if I'm five minutes late, I get written up every time or things like that. I'm talking about leadership like it's a kind of observation where there are people of integrity in charge and a type of organization where there's, you know ‑‑ here's our vision and we want to ‑‑ we want to get your input and we want to have a vision and we have a goal and we want to work towards that.

So it's that kind of stuff. And there are organizations out there that don't have that. When I started at my current job, the organization didn't have that.]

There was no plan. They had a work plan that had no vision behind it. It's just we are going to do this many classes and we will do this many IL services but there was no purpose. There was no meat. There was no meaning behind any of that. So leadership and planning is important.

I mentioned corporate culture and communications quite a bit. I will talk about communication in one of the next slides here a little bit more, but people stay in an organization when they feel like they are appreciated and when they feel like the culture of the organization is a place that they can be part of.

We don't talk a lot about pay and benefits and pay and benefits within the independent living world, and nonprofit world can be a little bit sticky, however, that being stead, we shouldn't accept lower expectations or low pay forever.

There are maybe within the little city of Minot here that I live in, my competition for employees is there's a college where employees can go to and get way better health insurance and get four hours of rest and relaxation time every month ‑‑ or every week, I mean. So they are really only working 36 hours a week. And, you know, that's ‑‑ and they get paid more money. So that's part of my competition.

People can go work at the state of South Dakota where they can make more money. But there's other things beyond that with pay. I work consistently to try to pay people. And I work really hard to provide the best health insurance for my employees. Unfortunately people with disabilities do have higher healthcare needs and if I can provide the best quality healthcare insurance I can purchase to my employees, I feel they will be at work longer and they won't be as sick as much and they will have less debt ruining their lives. I try my best to offer up the entire pay and benefits package that works well for people.

We talked a lot about training and development and resources and just investing in people and looking at it ‑‑ not only investing in people, individually, but investing in your organization. So here's our goal, here's what we want to shoot for. You look around and say, do we have the capacity to do that and how do we increase the knowledge around the table to get that a little bit better?

Engagement is extraordinarily important as well. People need to know and they need to understand that their input is valued. And that we are intentional with creating opportunities to listen to folks. So, for example, when we talked about that planning and those goals, when we send in our annual work plan, every single part starts with direct service staff giving me direct input and it starts with teams of people talking about their independent living‑based goals or their organizational‑based goals and they are fed up to me.

Not every one of those are necessarily approved or end up on our final work plan or what the board ends up planning but every single thing starts that way. And so we allow that and then we flip it back around and we say, now every one of us are responsible for being engaged and achieving this organizational goal. It's not me as the executive director or the board of directors or our management staff's goals. This is your goals. How are you going to figure out how to do that? And some of our most engaged employees are the ones who have the work plans and the goals integrated into the personal employment goals and into their ‑‑ into their daily life and everything else. And then begin to feel as if they are part of something a little bit bigger.

Role satisfaction is important and flexibility comes into play so much here, that just because somebody was hired for one job doesn't necessarily mean that that's what they will do forever. And just because somebody is doing ‑‑ is really good at doing something today, that doesn't mean that's what they want to do forever. As programming changes, as work plans change and as directions for the organizations change, two allow people to grow into whatever role they want to be involved in and not to allow them to feel that this is just as good as it gets.

One of my longest termed employees who is also my oldest employee, has changed roles over the last few years about three times. And so she still has the same job title but what she's actually doing on a day‑to‑day basis has changed significantly, because she's been able to change the way the organization needed her to change, and she's been able to change the way that we ‑‑ the way that she felt could help make her a happier employee.

And finally, work environment, and work environment could be one of the most important things.

And this is kind of that holistic approach to what is the place like? Is it a welcoming environment to come in? Is it a warm place? Plants, a watercooler, coffee? Is there a proper temperature? By the way, there's probably nothing going to make a company feud more than the temperature of an office. Can you deal with that. I had to put out a policy one time on temperature of the office because people were fighting over it. And once we established it and set the expectation, people were a little bit better off.

But also, you know, is there a chance to have some humor in your work day? I talk about ‑‑ do you have an inside voice? Sometimes our jobs are frustrating. And is there a safe place where you can walk into somebody's office and say, oh, my God, I'm so frustrated. I can't believe this happened. I can't believe that happened S. there a safe place to allow that to be expressed without ‑‑ you know, without ‑‑ without destroying somebody because maybe they slip up and say something that they don't want said outside. I said use your inside voice. You need to come in my office, and vent, it's okay. This is a safe place. But when you go out, you need to treat everybody professionally.

So creating the work environment for as much individuality and safety and comfort as possible.

Brooke, I just talked a whole bunch. Do you have something to add to this?

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I think we want to hear if ‑‑ what the incentives are with everyone's organizations. So if you could raise your hand and that way we can open your mic, we want to hear that feedback about what great innovative incentives have been implemented at your CIL.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you, Brooke. I just logged into another computer and realized I don't know that you have mute and unmute. So if you can click the hand and raise your hand, I can open up your mic or you are welcome to type it in the chat.

But, yeah, start ‑‑ before we move on, just start thinking about what are the incentives at your CIL or what are some of the reasons why you stay or are satisfied with your work?

So I will go ahead and let you, Brooke, move forward while folks are thinking about that.

And we'll jump in as soon as we get some.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Okay.

Yeah, Scott, I think you did an excellent job with the information. I don't have anything to add. It was great.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And I will just add on, you talked a little bit about incentives, and I will throw that out. Little things that you can do, oftentimes make a big difference. I may have mentioned that, but maybe having a pot luck or having a barbecue. We have a barbecue grill that was donated to us a few years ago. So every once in a while, we went and grilled up some meat on a Friday afternoon. Take an hour out of your time. We have a staff board Christmas party, just little things leek that do tend to go a really long way.

We celebrate ‑‑ we celebrate accomplishments. When I talk about staff meetings earlier, every single staff meeting, we not only celebrate things like anniversaries and birthdays or major accomplishments like somebody graduated college or got a new certificate or something like that. Those are important to celebrate. But also, life things.

Somebody had a baby or somebody's son is graduating from high school, or somebody got married or divorced or whatever major accomplishment that you want to celebrate, we try our best to celebrate it and it's important to know that little bit about employees and to recognize it. Or if somebody is going through a down time or the office is a little stressful.

It happens a few hours ago here, amber, our financial director is like, I feel like the mood is too tight around here. She went to the store and got cookies. And then everybody was like, shucky darny, I will ruin my diet. And everyone ate those cookies. Those things can make a difference.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I think when you have the staff meetings or however frequently you are meeting, a kudos session, just at the beginning of the meeting, open with kudos and give your staff an opportunity to just show appreciation for another staff member. It's really those little moments that really make a difference. I think gratitude, even though it seems so simple, we can get caught up in our day‑to‑day responsibilities and just forget to be thankful to our staff members.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you, Brooke. While folks are thinking about their thoughts here, if you do have the option to mute and unmute from phone, please do so and jump on in or press star six to unmute your line or raise your hand. And I will add that Brittany added in the chat box, similar to Scott's CIL, we have great insurance benefits.

Employees also get a paid day off for their birthday and a floating holiday to use as they choose. I'm taking that one to the bank, Brittany! That's great.

I stay at my job because of the flexibility to work from the strengths and explore things I'm passionate about.

Another incentive scam; related to training. My CIL paid for me to say an ASL course since I work directly with a Deaf coworker. That's a great example, I think of a staff benefit, is that professional development in training, you know.

I will throw my two cents in that working at my CIL, that's really how I got my jump start into my career and that's how I figured out what I was interested in and how I was able to pursue it further. So I agree, Brittany.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And just to kind of add on to that too, the importance of supporting people and their goals.

When I was going to college, and working at another, center, I went back to college like in my mid‑30s or whatever, and my boss came to me and said, you know what, if you ‑‑ I had kids at the home at time, if you need a quiet place to do homework, you can use our office. You can use some of your training budget to help pay for, you know, some paper and things like that in order to help. It was a huge difference because otherwise, I was at home, you know, trying to do it with screaming babies in the background and stuff like that. To come in on a Saturday and take advantage of some of the spacing and stuff like that was wonderful.

Now did it help me in my job? Absolutely it did. At that time, I was going ‑‑ my educational background was in business and I was working on entrepreneurialship for people with disabilities. So there was a direct correlation between what I was learning and how I was doing my job.

But ‑‑ but at the same time, that education helped me get another job at another center and I left there. It could have been easy for him to have been jaded and say, nah, I don't want you to doing that. But it made me a better employee for the next three, or four or five years. It didn't steal necessarily from our company, I mean other than the lights being on or whatever. I think I maybe used the copier from time to time. But it wasn't a major expense for the company. But it was a major benefit for me and it made me appreciate and feel appreciated and valued by the organization.

So you know, if you can do things like that. And I have offered that to staff I have had now. I said the same thing.

Come in, use our office space. Take advantage of it, because I want you to be happy. So ‑‑ all right.

So one of my favorite shows is "The Office." And this is a Michael Scott meme, would I rather be feared or loved? Easy. Both. I want people to be afraid of how much they love me.

That's exactly me ‑‑ no.

You are not always going to make everybody happy as a supervisor, no matter how good the benefits you roll out. You will have people who don't understand it. I think it was Brittany who talked about offering up really good health benefits is a good incentive and then there are others who complained, or maybe if you didn't give me such good benefits you could pay me a higher salary. But you have to do what you feel is right and move forward.

You can go on to the next one, Mary.

>> MARY OLSON: Thanks, Scott. And for those of you who are keeping count at hope. I think I finally figured out how to give you microphone rights. If someone wanted to jump in, feel free to do that while we are changing slides.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: So here's one of my favorite things of all times, I completed out after complete frustration at a staff meeting, many, many moons ago. And a lot of us who worked in organizations have probably said, you know what this organization really has is a communication problem.

And some organizations legitimately do and all of us from time to time are imperfect communicators, and as a lot of us know, of course too, many of us communicate in very different styles and not just necessarily like I use American Sign Language and I don't. But there's different communication styles in terms of the way I hear things or the way I perceive things in communication are very different.

And so one of the first things that I talked about in this triangle, at the bottom of it, it says personal responsibility and to me, so much about communication and effective communication is taking responsibility kind of owning your own stuff. And when I talk about what our corporate culture is, this is a big part of it. If I don't understand something, or if I'm confused, it's on me to try to figure it out or to talk to the right person.

And so if I'm in a board meeting, or a staff meeting, and there is a policy that comes out about, you know, what to do if you are going to be late for work. Rather than me ‑‑ if I didn't understand it or member, it doesn't make sense to me. It's important for me to have a one‑on‑one face conversation and explain this to me and own it.

If I own my own thing, my own stuff when it comes to communication, it's extraordinarily important. To really have that base, that is the foundation of good communication.

The next part up is trust. And within trust within an organization and communication is I'm going to trust that you ‑‑ that ‑‑ your intentions. I will trust that you will do what you into Ed to do. I will trust that you will handle things that I don't need to know about.

An example that I often use. I need you to trust the management of the organization to deal with stuff that you just ‑‑ I don't want you worrying about. I don't want you worrying about hard core budgetary issues or how we will adjust the budget to pay for the health insurance premiums. You can come and talk to me but I don't want to overburden you with it.

It doesn't mean that I'm hiding or I don't trust you or anything else, but rather that ‑‑ that ‑‑ not all decisions are Ma Ed yet and that especially comes up into the grant cycle. What are you going to do? Are you going to eliminate somebody? I will be honest and say ‑‑ I was honest and said, your grant is coming to an end. I would prefer to keep you on, but if you can't, this is when your job will end. I will continue to communicate with you. And I didn't want that person coming to me every day and being like, what has changed or whatever, but just really paying attention to that trust mechanism.

And it gets down to a much more basic basis too.

If I don't like the way you communicated with me, I will tell you how I prefer to be communicated with. Or if I don't like this, just really owning that and on top of that is communication and unapologetic about it and communicated in multiple formats.

When ‑‑ you know, it's not uncommon for us to sit down at a staff meeting and explain something, and follow it up an email. And type up what we are going to say and hand it out to everybody else. We have it in written format and they have it in verbal format and to really be as open as we can with communication in order to do it. I try to hard to establish, we do not care about explaining it two or three times. I cannot begin to tell you how many times I had part B and C explained to me and I couldn't remember!

And also I will be honest with you, as Mary knows very well, I have no ability to understand the differences in time zones and every time I deal with anything time zone‑wise, it's like major anxiety and people have had to explain to me, many, many times the difference between Mountain Time and Central Time and Eastern Time and I keep asking and I will continue to keep asking up until the day I have clocks on my wall in each time zone so I can remember it.

And so we all have things like that, that maybe we just don't understand yet or we don't get.

I just had somebody come to me, not too long ago, a rather long‑term employee and really wanted to talk to me a little bit about ‑‑ oh, shucks, what was it? It was a core IL issue. Oh, why is it that we say that information referral that everybody is a consumer ‑‑ or that everybody is eligible and they were really struggling with that simple concept.

And rather than shaming them or coming down on them because they didn't understand a basic concept, I sat down and had a conversation about it and kind of allowed them to in a different way understand the importance of why writing information referral to everybody in the community and not just obviously people with disabilities was so valuable.

I appreciated the fact that they could come to me and be vulnerable and do that. And human growth happens through vulnerability. So we really want to allow people to be communicated to in multiple ways.

So Brooke, do you have anything to add under the communication topic?

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Yeah. Yes, I do. I think that the communication triangle as Scott mentioned, it's important for the whole team. I think it's particularly important for leadership. So kind of the example that Scott gave with his employee and the grant that's ending, I recently heard just kind of like an example of, you know, in one instance, the CEO came in and said, you know what, we had ‑‑ we had a great year, and we have done so great, and, you know, I just really thank everyone, however, we are going to have to do layoffs.

Versus the CEO communicating in a way like, hey, you know, we did well, however, we didn't really meet our goals, so we are going to have to do layoffs. I think that that communication, being able to be transparent, I think that that is so important for leadership because you don't want to really confuse people. So if you are going to have to do layoffs or do something that's not really ideal, you really ‑‑ you really want to explain why that's happening.

Because really, it's only going to build that trust in the leadership, and I think in the triangle personal responsibility, I really love the word "accountability." I just ‑‑ I mean, I think that accountability is so great and so important, taking that personal accountability.

In my role, I mess up. There's a lot that I don't know and I'm still learning. I just ‑‑ I actually ‑‑ yesterday, was my work anniversary. I'm celebrating one year in IL now. So there's still a lot that I have to learn. So when I do make those mistakes, I really try to own up and take responsibility for them. And really try to learn how I can improve.

 So I really think, again, communication is trust so vital in so many different aspects, and, again, when we were talking about the organizational culture, you really want to look at how you are communicating that, right?

So a lot of organizations, they kind of communicate their culture through core values. And they'll say, you know, our core values are transparency, accountability, and they will list them out and it will be like three or four easy things. So I think that those are good ways to communicate who you are.

I think that ‑‑ that that's just a really good way to convey, to easily convey what your organization is focused on, especially if you are bringing in new staff members.

So ‑‑

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And one thing, I will say, first, congratulations on your one‑year anniversary.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Thanks, Scott.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: One thing we communicate, it will take you to two to three years before you are fully competent staff and it becomes kind of a joke because people, when they get like two years they're like I'm competent today and then they're like I don't know anything. I want to make sure that I establish you do not have to be an expert on day one.

And, in fact, if you come in and think you are an expert, you are going to hit a wall pretty soon. We deal with all types of people and all types of disabilities and all types of socioeconomic backgrounds and all types of bureaucracies and this is complicated stuff that we are doing and so it is a ‑‑ it is ‑‑ people will be like, I don't know anything.

One of my staff came to me one day. She was like, Scott, I don't think I understands disabilities well enough. What do you mean? Where can I get training? She was looking at it from a medical perspective and I'm teaching her about the civil rights perspective of disability. So we had an amazing conversation about that.

And ‑‑ but, yeah, just being able to take the time and give yourself a break and usually about the time that person hilts three years and they are competent, I tell them I have been doing this for almost 19 years and I'm not fully competent yet. There's so much to learn and going back to when you were talking earlier, about what kind of characteristics you look for in employees, I love to look for people that are naturally curious.

I love to look for people that see a problem and try to figure things out, because to me, we are an organization that solves problems. A movement that solves problems and I want to have an organization that enjoys figuring things out.

>> MARY OLSON: I mentioned, I see Flora, that you had unmuted. Yourself. Did you have something you wanted to add?

Let me pause a moment. If anybody else would like to add anything, you know, we would love to be able to have a conversation around it.

While folks are trying to jump in, you were talking about having those conversations, Scott, and I want to take a minute to give a shout out to my IL alma mater, if you will, Summit Independent Living Center in Montana. And I had a wonderful program manager, Jude Munson, who she would actually sit down with me when I was new and she's made space in her calendar to visit with me once a week, just to sit down and answer those questions of, you know, was there anything that you encountered? You didn't understand?

She would sit down and spend hours going over the IL alphabet soup and who all the organizations were and something she said for me and is the reason why I stayed and why I have been in IL for 10 plus years now. She really made a point to connect me in to the idea that independent living is not just a job. It's a movement and a way of life.

She really, you know, explained to me and gave me teachings on what ADAPT was and what APRIL was and what NCIL was and ILRU was and exposed me to this whole movement, rather than it just being a job. And for me, you know, that has made all the difference because it's something that I really believe in.

I think when you believe in something, you really want to stay and you want to do well. Just my two cents.

Anybody from the audience have anything they would like to add? Your two cents if you will? You can shout it in if you are having difficulty with your mic. I would be happy to voice it. Or you can unmute and mute.

All right. Hearing phone right now. We will go ahead and move on.

Brittany was telling me she was having trouble with her microphone. I will be Brittany's voice. One important thing that management can do when it comes to communication is meeting staff where they are, just as we do with consumers, not expecting that all staff have the same communication or learning styles. Some will need regularly scheduled meetings with agendas, whereas others will come to talk to you when they do have the questions.

Ah. Another great point, Brittany.

I think in IL, you know, that's what we do best is meet people where they are at, and if we are going to do it for our consumers, why not for our staff members?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And I think to kind of add on to that too, you are absolutely right, Brittany, is being able to understand different people have different needs which is so duh! Of course. That's the currency that we traffic in on a regular basis.

But to realize too, not everybody thinks and sees and communicates exactly the way that I do. And so how can I meet you? And I tell this chameleon‑type leadership. I will be the type of leader you need me to be. If you know, if you need somebody who will hit you with a two by four every time you get out of lines, sometimes I will do that. If you need a manager who coddles and give a lot of attaboys, I will do that. It's a matter being the type of leader that people need in order to ‑‑ to achieve their own personal goals which also hopefully help you achieve your organizational goals.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Scott a question I have for you, how do you identify kind of the type of leader that your staff needs or is that just a question that you ask?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Yeah, sometimes it is. Like, what do you need from me is a conversation we ‑‑ it's actually part of our interview questions. What type of supervisor do you need? Although you don't always get honest answers because people are trying to answer and give you the textbook answer.

It's a combination of feeling it out and trying to see what works with people. But a lot of it is communication, like, does this work? I have ‑‑ I have one employee here who is a former division one college athlete, and, you know, she grew up her entire career being yelled at by coaches. I could go into her office ‑‑ I could start screaming at her about something she did wrong and she wouldn't lose an ounce of sleep over it because that's just what she's used to. She likes things very direct. Scott, you can be direct. You don't like something I do, come and tell me. Don't worry about sugar coating it with me.

And then other people, you get that feeling a little bit more that part of the culture, the world I live in, we tend to be a little bit more Scandinavian which is passive aggressive, which is don't hurt my feelings at all type of things. We are aware of that. It's a combination of asking people and then, you know, paying attention and trying to figure it out.

So ‑‑ and sometimes people change too, depending what the situation is.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: That's true. In addition to talking about communication, we wanted to also talk about clarifying expectations. And I think that communication is definitely vital to that. So we included an image here, and, you know, don't let it be like a game of telephone. In the image, you know, everyone has played telephone, right, where you start with one word and you pass it down. By the end of the game, it's a whole different word.

So, you know, you really want to be up front, and be very direct about your expectations and really from day one, that staff member should know what's expected of them. You should have a one‑on‑one conversation. You should always also be having those one‑on‑one check‑ins as well and that provides an opportunity for, you know, leadership to say, hey, you know, you are doing a great job here, but, you know, let's work on this goal because we're not quite meeting it.

And also, that gives you that space to just talk to that individual one‑on‑one as opposed to you know, kind of calling them out in front of the group.

I also when we talk about expectations, of course performance reviews come into play.

I know ‑‑ how every organization handles performance reviews is a little different. I'm most familiar with performance reviews around six, every six months, and really that's like a ‑‑ again, it's that sit‑down where the staff is being informed of really how they are performing, but, again, these don't have to be very formal. You can have those informal kind of sit‑downs and conversations with your staff, but you just always want to keep that line of communication open. You never want to leave someone guessing how they are doing. Like, oh, I think I'm doing what I should be doing but, hmm, I guess I will find out at that performance review. That's not what you want to do.

Scott, do you have something to say?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: I want to add, first off, you know, full disclosure here, I hate performance reviews. They are too formal for me. I like giving performance evaluations. I like talking to people, but you are absolutely right, Brooke, you got to constantly have communication with people. There's ‑‑ the absolute worst thing you can do as a supervisor, as a leader is save stuff up until somebody's performance review. Nothing should surprise anyone at a performance review. Maybe surprise them with how well they have done or surprise them, hey, this is what I see you doing in the future, but if somebody is like I said coming in late to work all the time or somebody is doing terrible on their paperwork, they better know that is coming.

And I oftentimes give people a self‑evaluation prior to their formal performance review. And I hope and pray that everything on there is exactly the issues that I'm giving and most people evaluate themselves worse than I do. But ‑‑ and, again, with exceptions I think we all had those employees that you met with one‑on‑one and you had coaching both formal and informal and they do the performance review and they're like the perfect employee. And you're like, um, have you been paying attention?

In general, people tend to be tougher critics on themselves. And I think you said this earlier too, Brooke, some people, it's an open door policy. You know, come in and talk to me whenever you want. I'm actually surprised. I have been on the phone here for, you know, a little over an hour, or on this webinar for a little over an hour, and no one has randomly come into my office to ask me a question. But some people, you have to be like, Leah, I'm going to meet with you on Tuesday at 2:00 and we're going to go through a few things.

If I don't schedule a time with her, she's not coming in. So it goes both ways.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I think it goes back to understanding your staff and communicating with them. Everyone's needs are different. I know even there's some individuals that I worked with, where they really prefer that even if we have a conversation in person, that everything should be followed up with an email. I totally get it.

So really, just kind of knowing expectations and really doing your best to meet them. And I think it goes ‑‑ it goes really both ways for ‑‑ it's important for leadership to again clarify expectations, but it's also important for this staff to also communicate kind of what their expectations are of leadership too.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Great. And I don't want to get into a lot of like human resource policy type of stuff here, but there's nothing wrong too with meeting with the chief of employees. And sometimes you are like I have talked to this same employee about this issue for 15 times and I get to the point that it's not the right job for them. We have talked about this a lot.

And I have it from time to time had people that came back to being ‑‑ pretty soon you find out that they are looking for another job and it's not the right fit. Again, there's no harm in that. Independent living is not for everybody. And even who knows it might not be the right for everybody on this call forever. There's no harm in that. And just to accept that, that we want to be the best employees and employer that we can be right now.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I know some organizations, they do more of a formal performance improvement plan. So if there's kind of a recurring issue, it is a sit‑down between the manager and the staff member. And, again, like Scott was saying, I know it seems kind of scary, because it formal, but sometimes there's a need for that to really document kind of those kind of recurring issues and to say, hey, we have come up with a plan, but, you know, it's just ‑‑ it's not working.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And I have been involved in organizations, big organizations that are very, very formal, kind of, you know, progressive discipline plans, wherever, it's like the first time you get a verbal warning. The second time is a written warning. The second time is a second written warning. The third time is a suspension and the fourth time is termination. And, you know, that can be a lot of work.

That can work for some people. Some people, like, they didn't get the verbal warning. But when you hand them that piece of paper, then they get it.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Mm‑hmm.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And so, yeah.

>> MARY OLSON: Can anybody have thoughts that they wanted to add? You can ‑‑ all the different ways you can chat or unmute or raise your hand. Everybody is just soaking it in.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Mary, I'm curious outside ‑‑ if there's question, that would be great. But I'm curious if organizations or CILs are using kind of those more formal performance reviews or kind of like the informal check‑ins. Or are they doing performance improvement plans? Kind of what's going on? That's what I want to know.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And while you guys are all getting ready and typing in or whatever, I will say too ‑‑ we actually have somebody who has in her job description that she's a mentor for the other staff and, you know, she's one of our longer term employees who has been in the human services field for a long time and she actually mentors people.

She's not a supervisor. She's somebody that doesn't have a formal relationship, that people can sit down with and ask questions to.

So we really do appreciate that. So ‑‑

>> MARY OLSON: That is a great idea! Mentoring staff.

So for folks in the audience, how do you do performance evals in your centers?

I see some names I recognize and I might call some out. I'm wondering ‑‑ I don't know, Brandon ‑‑ I know Brandon, I visited with you before, and I'm just wondering if you have any thoughts on what you do with your CIL.

>> BRANDON: Yes, this is Brandon Brown from Empower Tennessee in Nashville. We do performance evaluations every year on all of our staff and it's usually right after our fiscal year term, which is in July and so we take time and we have a standardized form that everyone is aware of so they know what they are being evaluated on.

They have an opportunity to self‑evaluate, so they provide their top strengths. They provide a couple of areas where they see they need improvement. They ask for, you know, things that they may need from their supervisor. And any accomplishments that we may or may not be aware of, just so we have that as a matter of record. So there's a process.

But beyond that, there's ongoing supervision, if you would, for staff. So our programs director meets with the IL staff in some way, shape or form at least once a week. And we are a small staff. I mean, we only have four IL specialists on staff, but, I mean, he talks with them at least once a week. Either face to face or over the phone, or Skype or, you know, in our staff meetings or whatever. So it's not like the annual evaluation is the only time you get feedback about what is going on, but it's also an ongoing process and so like Scott said, when you get to the annual eval, there are no surprises.

We actually had someone who ‑‑ and our rating scale goes from unacceptable all the way out to outstanding. Rightfully so we don't have anyone rated as unacceptable but she rated needs improvement. She knew she would get that rating when she got into the meeting. She knew there were places where she was really falling behind.

And so that was, you know, not a surprise for her and I just firmly believe that as part of our culture, is in transparency, communication, and, you know, making sure that, you know, do you receive that level of communication in the way you need to be communicated to.

So I have been really enjoying a lot of what I have heard from Brooke and Scott, because it's validated some of the things that we are doing here in Nashville, but it also has given me some ideas about things that we can do differently as well.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Thank you.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Awesome thanks.

>> MARY OLSON: Thank you.

Great. Anybody else have anything that they would like to share, either about they are performance evals or how staff know they are doing a good job?

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I think Brittany chatted in.

>> MARY OLSON: Wonderful. Brittany says we do annual performance reviews in line with the staff person's anniversary. The form includes feedback on their job duties directly from the job description, grant goals and where they stand, and feedback on what we call personal attributes, like communication, follow through, team work, et cetera. As was mentioned, there should be no surprise feedback, supervisors should be giving feedback and addressing issues as things happen.

Thank you, Brittany.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: And I think just being honest too as a supervisor, A, admit be vulnerable if you don't know the answer. That does happen from time to time. We need to work this out. I don't know what will happen right now.

But also, you know, just, again, being honest, like, this sucks! I'm sorry. This is not a good situation. I'm here for you if you want to come talk to me or whatever. But it's on unfortunate situation. And share bad news bad news bluntly. Don't try to sugar coat it too much. Don't try to, you know, too sweet. This sucks. I will tell you something that is not good.

It's better to get it out there, than to pretend or avoid it or hide it.

One other thing I wanted to add, more questions are definitely welcome. One thing, when we talk about communicating intentionally, we actually established ‑‑ I know this is not going to work in everybody's place but some of the rural people or people with small staff, we have a 15‑minute meeting at 9:00 every Wednesday morning, it's called team independence. And if you are not in the office, if you are able to, you can call into it. We don't tell you, like, don't ‑‑ if you have a consumer meeting at that time, that's fine. If you are available, we would love to have you there. It's 15 minutes and all we do is go around and say what is going on in your world. We don't want to talk about consumer stuff. We don't want to talk about too much, but, hey, I'm going on vacation this week. Or I will go do an APRIL conference this week. Or I'm getting ready to do this and everybody gets a couple of minutes to talk about it. And it's made a huge difference, even though we have a shared calendar, which another part of our more formal thing. People can go on and see on my calendar, what I'm doing but to be able to talk about it a little bit has made a huge difference in just improving organizational accountability and awareness for lack of a better term.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: I think that's really important too, because when you are ‑‑ when kind of everyone knows what everyone is doing, like, for example, if someone is in the middle of completing reports maybe the other staff member, if they are sent an email ‑‑ if they are sending an email to that person, they might not be upset if they know that she or he is working on reports when he is doesn't respond in a few hours. So it just creates a little bit of understanding.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: My staff knows when I'm doing the end of the year reports, M & M is coming out of my office and it's best to leave the door closed and leave Scott alone. Yes, absolutely.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Are there any other questions or comments?

>> MARY OLSON: Any other questions or comments or thoughts on this topic?

Are we learning anything today? I feel like I'm just soaking in all of your nuggets. I know I recruited you, but I didn't realize how great this would be. I'm just really pleased with all of the really great ideas coming out.

How about folks from the audience, are there things from today that really resonated with you?

Are folks out there?

We are.

K. Williams says, this webinar has been very helpful. Thank you!

Well, that's good to know. Good.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: You're welcome!

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Yeah.

>> MARY OLSON: We still have just a few moments left. We have, you know, just one or two more slides, but definitely, you know, please keep chatting in, or unmuting and saying your piece. We would love to hear from you on your center, what makes you stay, or, you know, what kinds of issues maybe are you facing at your center?

Well, folks, I may jumping in, would you want to maybe read this slide for us, Scott or Brooke?

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Is this mine, brook? I can't remember. I'll take it.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Yeah, we can ‑‑ go ahead. Yeah.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: I will do the first, you do the second.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Sounds good. Team work.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: So from conversation to implementation. If someone isn't right, it isn't my fault. That can be one of the hardest things to swallow, especially as a new supervisor. When I first got my job as an executive director, no matter what happens in the organization, it's always your fault.

But in all reality, it's okay. And I talked about this earlier, this may not be the right thing for everybody, and to almost view it and if I have an employee who is unhappy. If I have an employee here who is struggling with their job, this might not be the right job for them. And perhaps I'm stealing from other employees, perhaps I'm stealing from our granters or funders, if I continue to have them here, it is no not my fault if the employee is not right and to be okay with that.

I know I want you to be fearful of how much you love me, but sometimes if it isn't right, it's okay for somebody to leave the organization.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Yeah, and I think the point that I had is you don't have to do it all by yourself. You really want to utilize the skill set of why you are team and be open to feedback. So really this is something that I learned along the way because I'm very much someone who can just really focus in and feel like I have to do it all, and really that's not what it's about. And that's why the hiring and the training and everything is so important, because you really want to have a team. You want to have that strong team and you are not there to just do it all alone.

You know, I think for me, I'm a very ‑‑ I'm a big ‑‑ big basketball fan, especially college basketball. I hate that March Madness is already over. There are teams where they have an all‑star player and they do really great, but it's really those teams that everyone, you know, gets out and plays really hard that really end up, you know, making it to the Final Four and winning. It really takes the whole team. So really utilize the skill sets and the skills that everyone has.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Absolutely.

I was just going to say, it's interesting ‑‑ go ahead, Mary.

>> MARY OLSON: Sorry, go ahead. I was just going to say ‑‑ I was just asking you about the next slide.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: I totally forgot what I was going to say there. Oh, yeah. And that's one of those things too, I think, to the key of having employees appreciate how you appreciate their unique qualifications and expectations and skill set.

If you can adjust your workload around the strengths of your organization or of your employees, they begin to do things that ‑‑ so if you have somebody that is super organized and you are like you are in charge of this organizing. If you have someone who is a super, super good communicator and you give them opportunities to communicate or someone who is artistic. I have a staff member who is artistic and she's a program director. So program directors don't get to do very much art. So I'm intentional from time to time with finding things where I'm like, I want you to do this for me. I want you to create this for me.

And she appreciates that because that's not in her job title but it's something that benefits the organization and it benefits her as a person. If you can find opportunities to plug people into the right ‑‑ in successful situations it makes a big difference.

So ‑‑

>> MARY OLSON: Wonderful. And on that note, Stephen adds, at MCIL, we have a check‑in by email from everyone within our organization to let one another know our goals for that particular day.

Wow, that's such a great idea too., you know, the thing about goal setting they say, is if you put it out into the universe and tell other people, you are more likely to accomplish it. And so I love that idea of throwing out the goal for the day.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Love it.

>> MARY OLSON: And Brittany also mentioned that she really liked that point about asking people why they stay instead of focusing on those people and why they leave.

Yeah, wonderful.

Wow, can you guys believe it, we powered through an hour and a half of material. I know ‑‑ I know that, you know, gosh, we didn't even know if we would have enough material to cover an hour, and look at that.

Thank you, everybody, again, for joining us today for this call. On this slide up here, we do have a link for the evaluation from today's discussion. If you could fill that out, it should pop up in your screen once I close the webinar, as well.

You know, it really does help us to track how we are doing, and makes sure that what we are doing is valuable for you all.

We also will have the materials from today's call up at the APRIL website on this link here. The APRIL website underneath that IL conversations tab. And if you have think colleagues in your state or your organization who weren't able to join us today, we will make this recording available as well so they can go through the whole webinar, which I just think is so valuable. I'm going to push it out on our LISTSERV because I think the material you went through today, I think can really help all centers.

And then ‑‑

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Thank you. Brook thanks.

>> MARY OLSON: And then, gosh, we really, really appreciated you being our fearless leaders for today's call. And Brooke and Scott both graciously agreed to share their emails and so if you have any follow‑up questions or you would like to hear more about a certain ‑‑ you know, a certain idea that they brought up, feel free to email them or as always, you can reach back out to me, and we'll get you connected.

So that is our time for today, and if anybody has any thoughts or ideas for your center that you weren't able to share today, we could still really love to hear them. I will let you know as I'm giving you all a little dizziness. My email is at the bottom of this slide here, Mary.Olson@mso.umt.edu. I would love to hear your ideas from your center and we can include those in the materials on the website.

You know, a good friend of mine told me once that if you have seen one center, you have seen one center. Because Centers for Independent Living are so unique and we all do things in our own way, based on our communities, we would just love to hear from each one of you and how you are retaining staff in your area.

So thank you again, and we will see you in the webisphere for our next conversation.

>> BROOKE CURTIS: Awesome. Thanks, everyone.

>> SCOTT BURLINGAME: Yes thank you.

(End of webinar)