

# Rural Communication Strategies

## Disability and the Role of Public Libraries



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# Presenters

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# Project Objectives

1. Learning how libraries are networked within their respective rural communities.
2. Gathering best practices for sharing information and resources in rural communities.
3. Helping rural community-centered organizations better communicate information and resources to people with disabilities.
4. Assisting rural people with disabilities understand how they can find local resources and information in their communities.

# Additional Objectives

1. Increased awareness of disability needs in rural areas.
2. Identifying shared values and populations for libraries and Centers for Independent Living (CILs).
3. Exploring potential partnership between libraries and IL organizations for communication and programming.



# Why Libraries?

Libraries have the potential to serve a “transformational role in helping facilitate more complete participation in society” for people with disabilities.

(Library Bill of Rights, Services to People with Disabilities)



# What We Found

## Four Main Categories

1. Networking within a rural community
2. Sharing information and resources
3. Outreach
4. Accessing community information and resources



# Networking

- Informal networks
- Local partnerships
- “Community anchors”
- Stigma



# Sharing Information

- Broad approach
  - Digital
  - Print
  - Word of mouth
  - Social media
  - Local media
  - Newsletters





# Outreach



- “Invisible Patrons”
- “Not much disability here”
- CIL awareness and partnership

# Accessing Information



- Physical accessibility
- Digital accessibility
- Accessibility of materials and programs

# Discussion

Does this fit your experience?

That sounds like my  
library and  
community!

That is not my  
experience with  
libraries...

# Discussion

## What are libraries doing already?

### Interviewed libraries

- Partnering with disability groups to vet inclusive program planning.
- Working with a disability consultant to universally design spaces and programs.
- Using a “buddy system” to help provide patrons with disabilities a social connection and gain comfort in the library.
- Game Day doubling as respite care, with trained staff from community partners and a caregiver support network.
- Expanding craft classes to integrate the development of vocational skills.

# Discussion

What are **your** libraries doing already?

What are **your** ideas?

# Discussion

What could libraries and CILs  
do together?



# Thank you!!

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