




**dis****ABILITY**  
**LINK**  
*the center for rights & resources*

# Peer Support: The Bigger Picture


Presenter: Dr. Kim Gibson

# Peer Support

Peer support is not an add-on. It is essential infrastructure for autonomy, access, connection, and resilience.



This workshop centers the necessity of peer-led, peer-run, and peer-rooted approaches—grounded in lived experience, shared values, and mutual accountability.



We are not here to replicate systems that don't serve us. We are here to create new paths built on choice, dignity, and collective care.

## Why Peer Support Matters

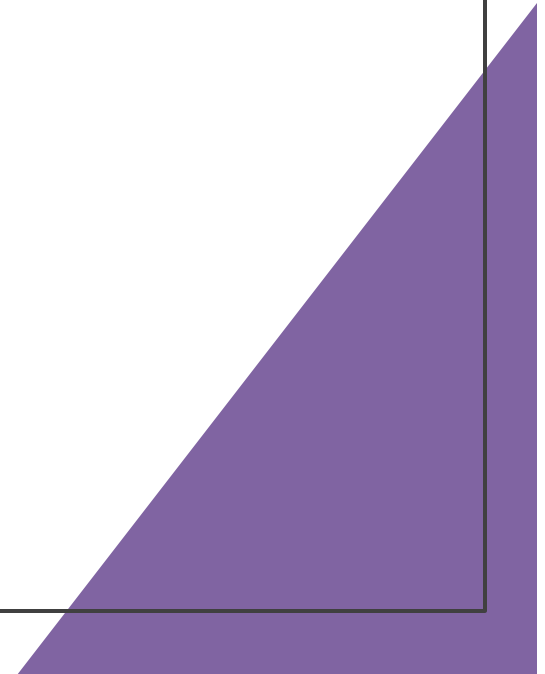
- Presence and understanding that cannot be taught

- Grounded in lived experience, values, and accountability

- Real, earned, and effective support

# Centers for Independent Living are known for:

- Advocacy
- Information and Referral
- Independent Living Skills
- Peer Mentoring/counseling
- Transition




# The Bigger Picture


- Founded by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities.
- CILs were created because traditional rehab, social service, and medical models did not meet the real needs of people with disabilities.
- Empowerment & self-determination.
- Ed Roberts and other IL founders emphasized that people with disabilities must have control over their own lives and the services they receive.
- Community-based solutions.
- CILs are intentionally local, grassroots, and responsive to the actual barriers people face in housing, work, transportation, and daily life. Lived experience as expertise.
- Peer support and leadership by people with disabilities is what makes CILs different from any other service provider.

# Centers For Independent Living

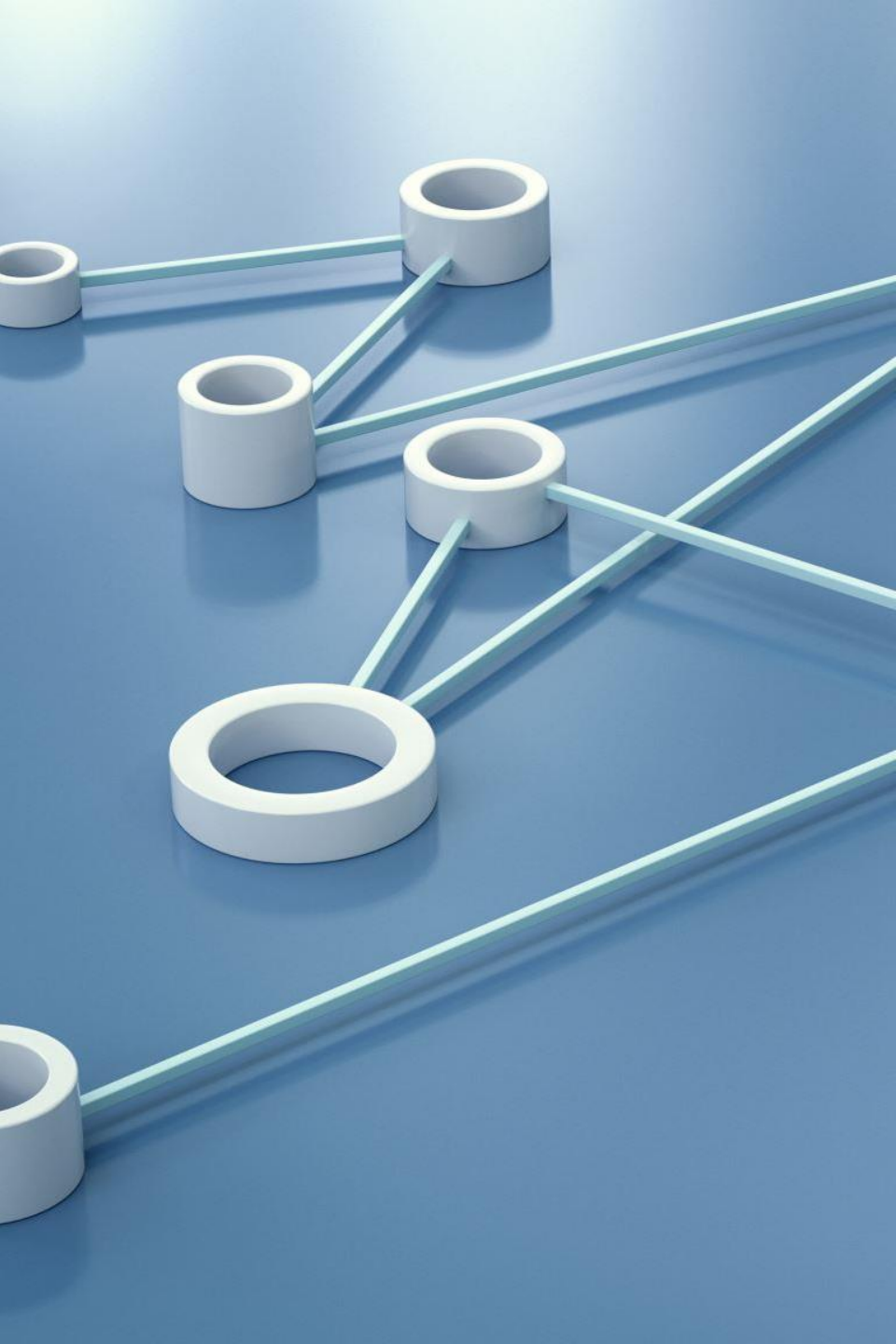
“We’re NOT here because peer-run organizations are ‘nice to have.’ We are not a supplement. We are not an add-on...”



“Experts by Experience have wisdom that cannot be taught in a classroom or replicated by even years of professional experience. It is unmatched. It is earned. It is effective.”



Ed Roberts: “We are not invisible. We will not be hidden. We will take our rightful place in the community...”



# What is the Connection?

- Peer support as part of community-based systems
- Explore unique insights of lived experience
- Reflect on your values that guide peer work
- Identify strategies for space, training, and networks
- Share and gather tools for leadership, support, and connection

# Peer Support?

## What does it take?

- Storytelling and values reflection
- Peer-based dialogue and learning
- Systems mapping and action planning
- Grounding practices for clarity, confidence, and purpose

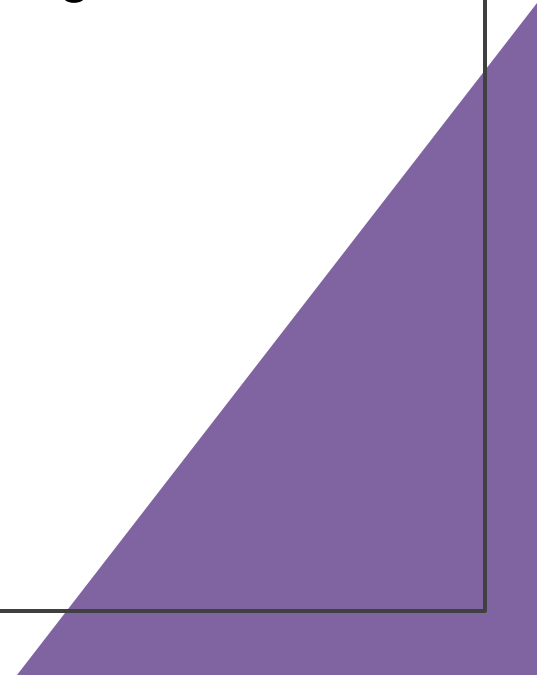


# Investing in Peer Support: Sharing our Story

- All staff complete a 3-day peer support training program
- Training also offered for consumers with a fee-for-service option
- Peer supporters are paid: 'Passion doesn't pay bills'

# Discussion 1

- In your experience, what brings down or brings up peer-run organizations?
- [Space for group reflection]



# Guiding Principle

LIVE. YOUR. VALUES. Unapologetically and without compromise.

- Supports values
- Safeguards mission
- Helps scale wisdom without losing authenticity

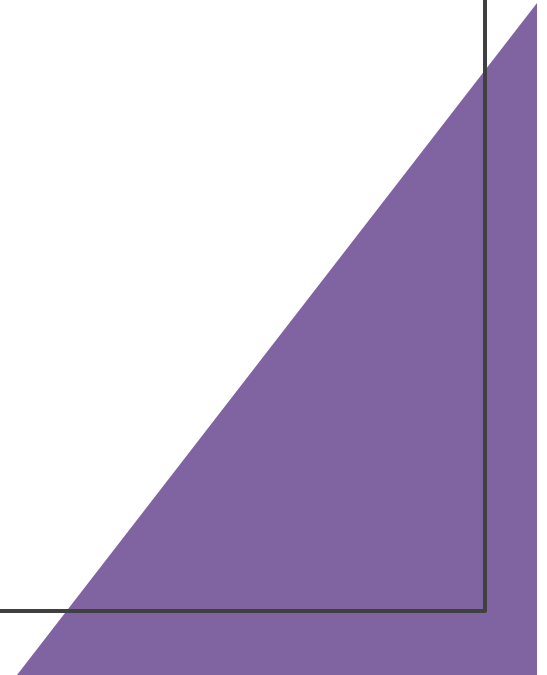


## Difference in Approaches

- Most organizations: start with compliance → build around restrictions
- Peer-run orgs: start with values, passion, and community need → then build infrastructure
- Policies safeguard authenticity and credibility

# Discussion 2

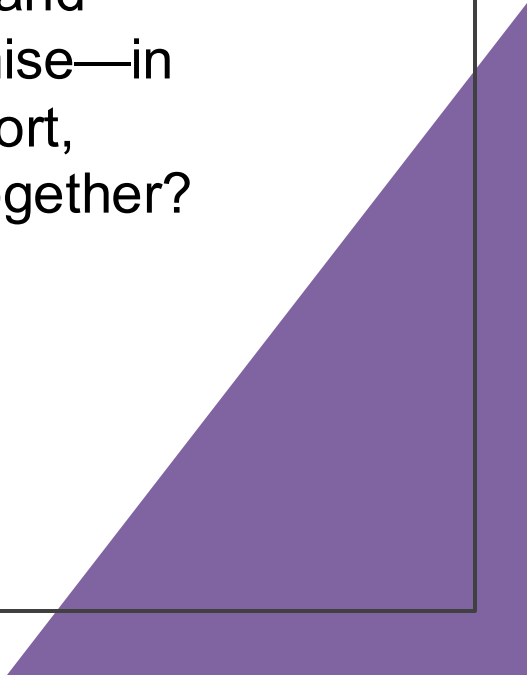
- How can policies safeguard authenticity while helping us fulfill our mission?
- [Space for group reflection]



# Reflection

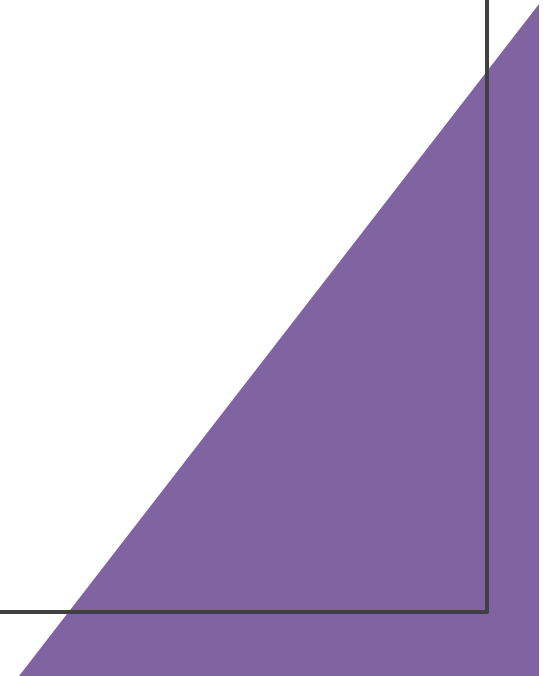
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- What does it look like to live our values—unapologetically and without compromise—in the way we support, lead, and build together?



**Ed Roberts** (IL Movement founder)

“When we help each other, when we model for each other, when we recognize, peer counseling, peer modeling, the kinds of things that we can do together ... that’s the most important thing.”



## Closing / Contact Info

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