

Lehigh Valley **Center for Independent Living**  
**Newsletter**

---

LVCIL Newsletter

Spring, 2026

---



---

“Whats going on?”

I Can do Anything

Your Board in Action

---

## Who We Are

LVCIL is a non-profit organization based in Allentown, PA that provides services and support to people with all types of disabilities.

At LVCIL, we believe that every individual has the right to live a healthy, happy, and productive life in a community that is free from all barriers. We can help you achieve or maintain your independence through many of our supportive services and programs.

The Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living (LVCIL) is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization that serves people with disabilities, and their family members, living in Lehigh and Northampton Counties.

## What We Do

LVCIL offers a many services and programs. But like all Centers for Independent Living we offer our 5 core services.

### Information and Referral

Information and referral can help you find the programs, services, and support you need to live independently.

### Advocacy

To put it simply, advocacy is standing up for your rights and what you believe in.

### Peer Support

If you feel like no one understands you, or that people treat you differently because of your disability, LVCIL's peer support can help.

### Independent Living Skills

We can help you achieve independence by providing you with the information, support, and education you need to live independently and remain independent.

### Transition Services

We offer a number of services regarding Youth, Nursing home, and Life transitions. From training, education, and coaching - to social groups and support.

## Where To Find Us

713 North 13th Street, Allentown, PA 18102

By appointment only

Contact Us

610-770-9781 - info@lvcil.org

# Table of Contents

## LVCIL Newsletter: Spring 2026

<b>Whats Going On?</b>	<b>1.</b>
<i>A message from LVCIL's Executive Director</i>	
<b>LVCIL goes to Washington DC</b>	<b>3.</b>
<i>A day of Advocacy with the AAPD</i>	
<b>"I Can do Anything!"</b>	<b>5.</b>
<i>A Journey of Advocacy, Friendship, and Achievement</i>	
<b>Your Board in Action</b>	<b>7.</b>
<i>A message from the 25-26 LVCIL Board</i>	
<b>With an Attitude of Gratitude</b>	<b>9.</b>
<i>By Debbie Rozear</i>	
<b>However Long it takes</b>	<b>11.</b>
<i>A story from AT / AC</i>	
<b>News from LVCIL</b>	<b>13.</b>
<i>Various News from the CIL</i>	
<b>The Girl Talk Book Club</b>	<b>15.</b>
<i>CIL Benefits are Long- Lasting</i>	
<b>Practice Flight</b>	<b>17.</b>
<i>Community Inclusion For Young Children</i>	
<b>SDMPA</b>	<b>19.</b>
<i>What is SDM anyway?</i>	

**And more!**



# “Whats going on”

## A message from LVCIL’s Executive Director

**A** timeless song by Marvin Gaye. What IS going on? A question that many people are asking these days. And for the people that we see at the CIL, who are losing their homes or can’t find food, are asking it more and more. With prices up everywhere, some people we are seeing are having to choose between paying their rent or paying for the medications. And for the CIL, it has been quite a year. Back in September, because of the state budget impasse, we had to release 15 staff from LVCIL and Bucks. All of the staff from Bucks are back at this point and as of the end of May, we are not fully back a full capacity.

*(Continued on next page)*

We’ve changed processes, have scrimped and not spent money, changed approaches, looked at alternative funding sources and done all that we can to make sure the CIL doors stays open. We know how important it is to our community, so we fight each day with all that we have. We’ve learned a lot and want to make sure this type of thing never happens again. One thing we’ve learned is that it can’t be just the CIL.

We need to work with other disability organizations who are in the same boat. We’ve always had this mentality, but it has rung true even more so in the past year. Our collaborative efforts with other non profits are up significantly. We’ve also identified the need to support more self advocates, the people who are impacted directly on the day to day level when funding doesn’t happen or organizations close. We need to train more advocates and do so in a way that they can speak up for what they believe in and what they need in life to be successful and independent. So what’s going on at the CIL is that we will be making concentered efforts to teach people to be their own self advocates on an individual and systems level.

We have always done this, but need is greater now than ever.

Part of this will be working with other organizations. Part of it will come from our newly formed systems advocacy committee taking an active approach. The other part will come from story telling, show casing people with disabilities living their lives to the fullest and being successful. We’ll have a “stories” page on the LVCIL website in the very near future. So, if whats going on in your life is in line with what we are thinking, please reach out. If you’d like to join our systems advocacy team, please let me know.

We will be launching a new stories page on our website, where we can highlight your experiences and words directly for all to see. If you have a story that you’d like to share, don’t hesitate to reach out.

We’ll get there, but we need your help.

Seth Hoderewski  
LVCIL Executive Director

*Want to help support LVCIL by making an end-of-the-year gift?  
Visit [lvcil.org/donate](http://lvcil.org/donate)*

# LVCIL goes to Washington DC

## The CIL's team up with the American Association of People with Disabilities for a day of advocacy

During the week of May 14th, Claire from BCCIL, Zane, a BCCIL board member and Executive Director, Seth Hoderewski went to Washington DC for some advocacy work "On the Hill" The Trip, supported by the American Association of People with Disabilities. The AAPD, founded by disability advocate and activist, Just Dart, brought in advocates from all of the country. We met and talked to people from Michigan, California, Wyoming, and as far away as Hawaii.

Day one was a travel and day two consisted of a full day of training related to the topics we'd be advocating for along with how to integrate story telling into our meetings. We met our team lead from Los Angeles, Aubrianna, who was not only a great team leader, but genuinely a natural advocate. We took time to develop our plan for the next day. Our goal was to talk to our legislators from PA about 3 specific topics.

The first was increasing limits from the amount of savings an individual or couple on SSI could have. The ask was for \$2000 to \$10000 for an individual, and \$10000 to \$20,000 for a couple.



**2026 Disability Power on the Hill Recap**  
**AAPD**

Image: A group photo on a Capitol building steps



Image: LVCIL and AAPD Staff with posing with US politicians

The second topic surrounded funding Medicaid and the impacts of it not being funded on people with disabilities. The third topic related to fully funding the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Three very important topics that impact our consumers every day. We also wanted to talk about who we were as a Center for Independent Living, and what we can do for their constituents when the need arises. Day Three consisted with meeting with Senators. Our first stop was a coffee conversation with Senator McCormick.

This consisted of being in a larger room with about 80 other people and their causes. We were able to get a few minutes with the Senator as he worked the room. He mentioned that his predecessor, Senator Casey did a lot of work for people with disabilities, and that he wanted to learn

more. We had great conversations with a number of his staff and then he addressed the crowd. Our second stop was with Senator Fetterman. We ended up meeting with one of his staff, who mentioned that she had done significant work with people with disabilities in her past and listened to all that we said. As we were looking for an accessible exit, we bumped into Senator Fetterman, and were able to chat for just a bit. Yes, he was wearing a hoodie. Day four was even more eventful. We started the day with a group photo in front of the Capitol building and then set off to meet with our Representatives.

We were also tasked this day with stopping by another six or so PA Reps. Offices to drop off information. Our first meeting with Rep Fitzpatrick. His team asked a lot of good questions and Zane shared about his work at the farm and his boxing experience. Our second meeting with Rep Mackenzie got pushed back, so we took time to stop by the Library of Congress. After our meeting with Mackenzie, we hightailed it to an event on the Comcast rooftop. The view was awesome and we got to talk with a NBC Executive, who was a sponsor of AAPD and the event. They spoke about some of the accessibility work they have been doing, including how their work with the Super Bowl and Olympics showcased some of the most accessible work in Television history. Friday was a long travel day home.

It was an incredible few days of advocacy and learning from others from around the country. We hope to take what we've learned and apply it to our consumers and people with disabilities in Lehigh Northampton and Bucks.

**Thank you AAPD. It was a great week!**

# “I Can do Anything”

## *A Journey of Advocacy, Friendship, and Achievement*

Recently, Samantha Lurwick, a graduate of LVCIL’s transition programs, was inducted into the Pennsylvania Special Olympics Hall of Fame. A representative from the PA Special Olympics surprised her with the announcement during basketball practice.

“It was exciting,” she said.

At the Hall of Fame celebration at Penn State, Samantha gave a speech thanking the people who supported her journey. She also reflected on 20 years of being a Special Olympics athlete and the nine sports she has participated in. Her favorite sports? Basketball and volleyball. The weekend included meeting community leaders and carrying the torch to start the state games. But for Samantha, the most important part of Special Olympics has always been the people.

Those friendships and experiences began years earlier through programs at the Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living. Through youth programs, leadership activities, and advocacy experiences, she learned how to speak up for herself and ask for what she needed.

One of her earliest lessons in self-advocacy came after attending a transition conference with the CIL, where she learned about accommodations. “I’m short, and I need stepstools,” she explained.

She took that knowledge back to school and requested accommodations for herself, an important step toward independence. Over the years, Samantha has continued to advocate for herself and others. She has spoken with legislators, participated in awareness events, read to students during Read Across America, and shared her story with younger generations. She also gives back as a certified Special Olympics Young Athletes coach, working with children ages 2-7.

Beyond athletics, Samantha works as an office assistant, participates in a book club, attends dance and fitness classes, and stays connected with a wide circle of friends, many of whom she met through the CIL programs. When asked what she wants people to understand about people with disabilities, her answer is simple:

**“Treat us the same.”**



Image: A photo of Samantha Lurwick holding the Special Olympic Torch

And when asked what she can do, she doesn’t hesitate:

# **“I can do anything.”**

Samantha Lurwick’s journey is a reminder that with opportunity, support, and inclusion, people with disabilities can lead, contribute, and inspire their communities.

# Your Board in Action

## A message from the 25-26 LVCIL Board

Ever wonder what goes on behind the scenes at LVCIL? Hint: It involves a lot less “sitting around in stuffy boardrooms” and a lot more roll up your sleeves, fight for what’s right passion!

The 2025-2026 fiscal year through some major curveballs our way, including estate budget impasse that forced some incredibly tough operational decisions. But your LVCIL Board of Directors didn’t flinch. They partnered fiercely with our leadership team, advocated like rock stars (with some you help alongside), and navigated us right back toward growth and stability.

Grab a coffee and look at how your Board has been in action this past year!



## Balancing the Books & Busting Debt

**Goodbye, Deferred Rental Balance!** LVCIL earned a completely clean external audit and officially paid off its remaining 2024 facility balances, clearing the way for a stable cash flow moving forward.

## From the Harrisburg to Capital Hill: Advocacy with Attitude!

**Taking the Fight to Lawmakers:** Board President Michelle Mitchell and Executive Director Seth Hoderewski traveled directly to Washington, D.C. and Harrisburg, to push lawmakers for policy changes that would fund Centers for Independent Living (CILs) upfront rather than making us wait for delayed state reimbursements.

## Welcome Back! Program Revitalizations & High-Tech Wins

**The Team is Reassembling:** Thanks to stabilizing finances and a \$90,000 federal grant drawdown, we been able to bring back many members of our LVCIL Team that had to be released (and working towards returning to full capacity), and all of our Bucks County CIL team!

## Fresh Faces & Familiar Leaders

**New Energy on Board:** Our Governance Committee successfully recruited incredible new talent to drive us forward, including Dr. Fathima Wakeel, Winona Schappell and Amy Beck!

## The Future is Bright (and Funded!)

We aren’t completely out of the woods yet, but the energy on the Board is contagious. Between upcoming community fundraisers, a brand-new \$5,000 sponsorship from the Greater Lehigh Valley Auto Dealership Association, and a whole lot of grassroots passion, your Board is in action to ensure a more accessible, independent future for everyone in the Valley!

*Want to get involved with a Board committee or join the advocacy movement? Reach out today—we need your talents!*

# With an Attitude of Gratitude

***By Debbie Rozear***

## **Feeling angry, depressed, frustrated, overwhelmed?**

These are just a few emotions everyone experiences at times, whether disabled or not. Some days simply getting out of bed and facing the day can be difficult. Other times, we push ourselves through tasks that seem impossible to complete.

Research has shown that one small practice can help improve our mindset, even during challenging times: gratitude. Being grateful for what you do have and what is working well for you can make a meaningful difference. Though it sounds simple, it might not always be easy. Studies suggest in the evening, before going to sleep, write down three things that you are grateful for. Do this each night and over time you will lift feelings of despair; you will feel lighter and more peaceful.

Several years ago, a consumer shared a personal mantra with me. I do not know if it came from another source or if it was his own creation, so I will say the source is unknown.

***“I find my peace, when I breathe and release.”***

Those words have stayed with me for many years. I am reminded of the consumer’s positive attitude and that peace can begin with something as simple as slowing down, taking a breath, and letting go of what we cannot control.

Finding inner happiness can be difficult for many people. When the challenges of living with a disability are added to everyday struggles, life can sometimes seem overwhelming. Please remember you are not alone.

Each of us in on our own journey, and while life doesn’t always seem fair, we all face different challenges and opportunities. Life is often compared to a card game: we are all dealt a different hand, but what matters most is how we choose to play the cards we have been given.

## **Consider adding the following practices into your day:**

- Try reciting the mantra above or create a positive phrase of your own to repeat.
- Each night, write down three things you are grateful for.
- As this becomes habit, consider writing down three more things you are grateful for every morning too.

Nurture your well-being by spending time doing activities that bring you joy and help you feel connected to others. Talk with people you trust. Join a group that interests you. Begin a hobby. Make new friends.

Over time, you may notice positive shifts, not only in your attitude but also your overall outlook on life. This could impact many aspects of your well-being – your health, self-care, sense of purpose, and relationships with others. Through small, consistent actions of gratitude and connection, you can begin to find greater peace and joy within yourself – one day at a time.

# However Long it takes

## A story from AT / AC

After months of planning, coordinating, and overcoming obstacles, LVCIL's ATRC (Assistive Technology Resource Center) was able to provide Irvin, an LVCIL Consumer, with an iPhone through **TechOWL's** Reused Equipment Program.

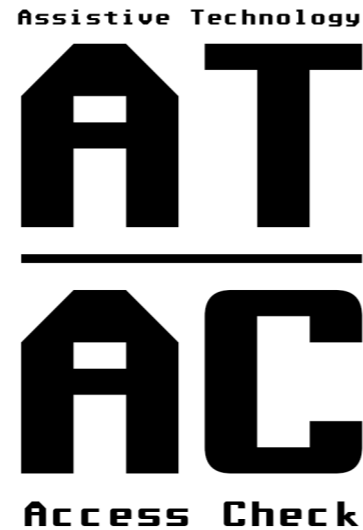
With the assistance of the ATRC, Irvin borrowed a few different 'smart reading' devices from the Lending Library. While helpful with some tasks, they did not provide the exact features he was hoping for. Irvin's ultimate goal was to get a pair of Meta glasses to assist with daily tasks such as reading, identifying objects, and describing surroundings for safety. These glasses need to be paired with an app on a smartphone, which Irvin didn't have. Irvin was not sure if he would be able to use a smartphone, as he was accustomed to tactile buttons rather than a flat touch screen.



Image: A photo of the Reused Equipment Inventory

Through other TechOWL programs, Irvin received a demonstration of an iPhone, where he learned that many functions can be activated by voice. He also borrowed an iPad from ATRC's on-site loan program. This loan allowed him to take some time getting used to iOS features such as Siri.

While Irvin was familiarizing himself with iOS, the ATRC received a donation of an iPhone from the family of an individual who had recently passed away. The security features of the iPhone prevented ATRC staff from being able to reset the device. With the help of Apple Support and extended family members, the login information was finally located among the estate items. The phone was able to be reset to factory settings with Irvin in mind as the recipient.



To add another layer to Irvin's quest for Meta Glasses, he found they were on sale for a limited time at his local Wal-Mart Vision Center, but he wasn't able to get a demonstration without the smartphone. An ATRC staff member happened to go to this store for her own personal appointment and inquired about the Meta Glasses. In conversation, the store manager mentioned that she had an individual interested but he did not have a smartphone.

While maintaining confidentiality, both parties realized they were likely supporting the same person. The store manager shared with ATRC staff that she will honor the sale price for "however long it takes for him to get a smartphone." She had a personal connection, as her late mother was blind and never got to benefit from assistive technology. With Irvin's permission, the ATRC staff explained that the plan for acquiring a smartphone was in the works and they shared professional contact information.

With the donated iPhone restored to factory settings, the ATRC staff provided the device to Irvin through the Reused Equipment Exchange Program. Irvin purchased the Meta Glasses with the help of the Vision Center Manager. ATRC staff was able to assist Irvin with learning some features and coached his caregiver on basic functions so Irvin could practice without the ATRC staff. When Irvin successfully sent a text message using just his voice, he smiled and said, "This is groovy!" Irvin has benefited immensely from receiving an iPhone through the Reused Equipment Exchange Program.

He can now send and receive text messages, as well as make phone calls with his voice. He is able to call in and join virtual groups, such as his daily church meetings. Irvin has been more confident being on his own, as he has learned that he does not need vision or tactile buttons to make and receive calls in case of an emergency. Irvin is excited to stay in closer contact with family and friends who he had previously felt isolated from with his inability to send text messages.



Image: A photo of Meta Glasses Via Meta.com

**For more information about LVCIL's Assistive Technology offerings, please call us at 610-770-9781 x 123 or email [atinfo@lvcil.org](mailto:atinfo@lvcil.org).**

# News from LVCIL

Small announcements and updates section

## GLAVADA Gala

On March 21st, LVCIL attended the Greater Lehigh Auto Dealership Association's gala. LVCIL staff Santiago, Seth, Claire, Aaron, Joe, Ingrid and Julianna attended. An LVCIL consumer, Board president Michelle, and development committee member, Diane, were also in attendance.

The evening was filled with music, food, and fun! LVCIL was fortunate to come away from the Gala with a grant donation of \$5000.

Thank you GLVADA. It will go to great use!



Image: A photo of Julianna holding her Award



Image: A photo of LVCIL Staff, Board, and Consumers at the Gala

## Julianna You Rock!

Congrats to LVCIL's own Julianna Rodrigues for receiving Moravian Universities Health Science Champion Award! Her work in the Community Inclusion for Young Children Project took her back to her Alma Mater for some great collaborative work with the University. Thanks Julianna for all you do for LVCIL, people with disabilities, and the community!

## Guardian Good stuff!

On April 29th, LVCIL visited Guardian insurance in Bethlehem Pa. LVCIL staff were able to speak to over 120 people about housing issues in the Lehigh Valley and about LVCIL programs and services.

At the end of the talk, Guardian employees filled 300 bags of non-perishable foods.

These donated will go to LVCIL consumers who are in need. If you are in need of food, don't hesitate to reach out to LVCIL at info@lvcil.org or 610-770-9781.

Thanks Guardian!



Image: A photo of LVCIL Staff in front of the Guardian Sign

## Thank you Yergey!

If you stopped by Yergey Brewing - a local Taproom and Brewery in Emmaus PA, on Saturday April 25th, you would have found members of LVCIL raising funds, awareness, and a few pints for those with Disabilities.

Every Beer sold that day had a portion donated LVCIL. And needless to say, it wasn't a hard pitch to get people to grab a pitcher and help out.

As good as the brew there is, it was equally as important was getting out into the community and letting people know who and what we are.

We want to give a big thanks to Yergey for having and helping us!



Image: A photo of two pints of Beer being clinked together, in Yergey's tap room.

# “The Girl Talk Book Club”

## *CIL Benefits are Long-Lasting*

“The Girl Talk Book Club” is a group of eight women with disabilities. As they graduated from school, they had to work hard to fill their lives with social activities, hobbies, sports and employment. And reading for pleasure was a struggle without the supports they had in school.

So LVCIL Board member LeeAnne Fura and her daughter Audrey decided to start a book club with Audrey’s friends. To accommodate the groups varying reading abilities, LeeAnne reads aloud while the members follow along with their copies. Each take turns providing a meal, celebrate each other’s birthdays and support one another through difficult times.

The book club now meet twice a month, with one member continuing to participate through zoom after she moved out of state.

All the girls have been a part of LVCIL’s social groups, like Adaptations and S2L (School to Life). These programs are designed to help young adults with any kind of disability live as independently as they want, especially when the time comes where they no longer need or get support.

“The Girl Talk Book Club” is just one sign of the programs success.



*Image: A photo of an LVCIL Staff Member testing the driving simulator*

**Reading list (So far)**

---

A Wrinkle in Time  
 Matilda  
 Anne of Green Gables  
 The Hobbit  
 Pride and Prejudice  
 The Bridge to Tarabithia  
 The Lion, The Witch, and the  
 Wardrobe  
 Jackie Robinson  
 The Book Thief  
 Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone  
 The Witch of Blackbird Pond  
 The Wizard of Oz  
 Johnny Tremain  
 Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH  
**And more ...**



On September 26th, LVCIL along with its partner, the Allentown Park and Rec Department will be hosting its 10th annual Fishing and fun in the park event at Lehigh Parkway. We invite the community to come out and learn about nature, health, and fishing with everything needed provided, including poles, bait, and experienced anglers there to teach newcomers. We ensure it’s a fun event, accessible to all people of all ages and abilities. We also see it as a place where we can share valuable information and resources.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of this unique event. We are hoping to make it bigger and better than ever before and expecting a bigger turnout than in previous years. We are working on having activities throughout the day, like a helicopter landing, a boxing demonstration, an old timey baseball game and much more.

**SEPTEMBER 26 | 10AM - 4PM**  
**LEHIGH PARKWAY**

---

**Inclusive, Accessible Outdoor Fun For All Ages And Abilities**  
**LVCIL & Parks and Rec Arts, Crafts & Games**

**Interested in sponsoring the event?:** Contact [sethoderewski@lvcil.org](mailto:sethoderewski@lvcil.org)  
**To sign up as a vendor:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TVK789R>  
**To sign up as a volunteer:** <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A48A5AE23A5F4C61-64296165-fishing>

We’d love for you to attend , but to make sure it is a successful event, we could use some help. We need day of volunteers, speakers on different topics, resource fair vendors, different ideas and sponsors. If you have any interests, please don’t hesitate to reach out to [sethoderewski@lvcil.org](mailto:sethoderewski@lvcil.org)

# Practice Flight

## Community Inclusion For Young Children takes to the Sky

Airports are stressful: Long lines, TSA, hoards of people all looking for the right gate, delays, and so on. Not to mention, for new flyer and frequent travelers alike, the experience of being thousands of feet above the ground at hundreds of miles an hour is strange experience.

So for those of us with disabilities, and those of us who have young children with a disability, all those stressors can seem impossible to navigate. Especially if this your child first time. Thats exactly how one of LVCIL's consumers felt this past June. 12 years old and about to take her first major flight on a school trip in a few days for a school trip, it was only natural to be nervous. But with CIFYC on her side - she got the rare chance to practice before her big day.



Image: A photo of Community Inclusion for Young Children and LV International Airport staff

**This project is funded by a grant from the Pennsylvania Developmental Disabilities Council.**



Image: ABE Airport Staff showing the tour their Sensory Room

## The Sky's the Limit

CIFYC's monthly Parental Support Group Meetings cover a wide range of topics. For many parents new to working around the unique needs and challenges surrounding their children, the focus tends to be one those major topics: Healthcare, Education, Housing, and more.

But life has so much in store for your children - and there are tons of expediences and topics that we can help you with. Exploring the airport and becoming familiar with the process of flying is just one of them. If you have anything you'd like to explore as a topic, please reach out: [communityinclusion@lvcil.org](mailto:communityinclusion@lvcil.org)

## Sensory Situations

ABE, also known as the Allentown International Airport, has put a considerable amount of care and intention into its accessibility practices.

One such effort is with their Sensory Room. One of only a handful of intentionally created spaces for those with sensory sensitivity, the space is equipped with mondo flooring, low frequency lightning, a mounted projector, and other sensory aware equipment.

While having access to these space for those with disabilities is important - all people regardless of their situation can benefit from spaces like this. And knowing that they exist can make a future trip more accessible.

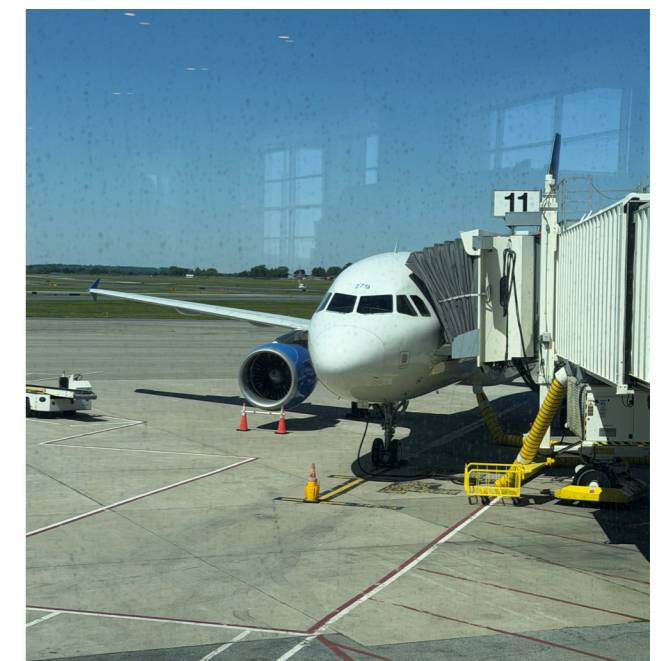


Image: A photo of an airplane in the process of being boarded pre-flight

# SDMPA

## What is Supported Decision Making?

Supported Decision-Making (**SDM**) is a way for people to make their own decisions with support from people they trust. Instead of having someone else make decisions for them, individuals build a “circle of support” that may include family, friends, mentors, or professionals. These supporters help them understand options, think through choices, and communicate their decisions.

SDM is about empowerment. It recognizes that everyone has the right to make choices about their own life, with the right support in place.

### Why Does Supported Decision Making Matter?

For many individuals with disabilities, guardianship has traditionally been used to provide support. However, guardianship can remove a person’s legal right to make decisions about important areas of their life, such as:

- Healthcare -
- Finances -
- Relationships -
- Where they live or work -

**Supported Decision Making offers a different approach. It allows individuals to:**

- Maintain independence and control over their lives -
- Build confidence in decision-making -
- Stay connected to their community and relationships -
- Pursue their own goals, preferences, and interests -

Research and lived experience show that when people are supported in making their own decisions, they are often happier, healthier, and more engaged in their communities.

### What Does Supported Decision Making Look Like?

SDM can look different for everyone. It may include:

- Talking through decisions with trusted people -
- Using tools like pros and cons lists -
- Receiving help understanding complex information -
- Having support during meetings or appointments -

The key is that the individual remains the decision-maker.

### What is Happening in Pennsylvania?

Pennsylvania law encourages courts to consider less restrictive alternatives to guardianship. Supported Decision-Making is one of those alternatives. There is growing momentum to formally recognize SDM in Pennsylvania law. Advocates, families, and policymakers are working together to create a legal framework that ensures SDM agreements are respected and recognized.

### How Can You Get Involved?

You can help raise awareness and support Supported Decision-Making by:

- Learning more about SDM and sharing information with others -
- Talking with family members, educators, and service providers about alternatives to guardianship -
- Supporting advocacy efforts to recognize SDM in Pennsylvania -
- Encouraging policymakers to support SDM legislation -

### Why This Matters for Our Community?

Supported Decision-Making helps build stronger, more inclusive communities. It ensures that people with disabilities have the opportunity to:

- Be heard -
- Be respected -
- Make choices about their own lives -

Everyone benefits when individuals are supported to participate fully in their communities.

To learn more about Supported Decision-Making and ongoing efforts in Pennsylvania, connect with local advocacy organizations and community partners working to advance this important issue.

**Or check our [www.SDMPA.org](http://www.SDMPA.org)**

# SEED STORY

## A Journey of Determination, Growth, and Transformation

The most rewarding part of being a SEED Coach is to witness students discover their strengths, overcome challenges, and achieve goals they may not have imagined possible. I have the honor and privilege of sharing a story with you—a journey defined by perseverance, personal growth, and transformation.

Georgianna Houck-Nolf joined SEED and attended Summer Bridge in July 2022. She began her Community College experience with an interest in healthcare-related fields. From the very beginning, her desire to be social and make friends was evident. As this was her first college course, Georgianna did struggle at times. Through Person-Centered Planning, she began to identify her strengths and growth areas, define her goals and build a plan for success.

Throughout her college journey, Georgianna experienced tremendous growth both inside and outside the classroom. At SEED, she learned skills that strengthened her independence and confidence. She learned to use a computer and check email, set up and participate in Zoom meetings, count money, and improve her reading and writing skills. She practiced spelling by writing notes, completing word searches, and eagerly read the campus event notifications. She overcame performance anxiety with presentations and speeches. Her risk spurred the support and kindness of faculty and students.



*Image: A photo of an Georgianna Houck-Nolf at graduation.*

She became familiar with every campus office and many of the classroom locations and soon, she was showing new SEED students around the campus. She even earned a nickname, “Georgie.”

One of her goals was to increase her career skills during her time at the college. She held a campus job with the busy, and sometimes hectic, Career Development Center for two years. Over time, systems were put in place that increased the overall organization of the department. This was a benefit for all students and Georgie thrived with clear instructions and supervision. She



*Image: A photo of two young adults at a table, in the LCCC SEED Program. “Success, Engagement, Education, Determination (SEED) Program”*

demonstrated tremendous growth in professionalism and time-management. By the time her position concluded, Georgianna completed her tasks with little supervision. Her infectious motivation and joy were evident to all that interacted with her.

Some of her other goals went beyond academic skills. Navigating the social aspects of campus life were new for Georgianna and managing emotions could be difficult at times. During her time at LCCC, she demonstrated increasing maturity and responsibility, improved her interpersonal communication, and learned the importance of flexibility when facing new situations and challenges. Beyond academic skills, these abilities will serve her throughout her life and career.

One of the most meaningful aspects of her growth was the relationships she built along the way. She created and maintained friendships, became an empathetic and supportive peer, and developed allies throughout campus among students, faculty, and staff. Her kindness and willingness to encourage others helped create a stronger and more inclusive community for everyone around her.

As her interests evolved, so did her career goals. While she initially focused on healthcare, she discovered a passion for art and creativity. This transformation led her to pursue preparation for an activities-based career, where she can use her artistic talents and natural ability to connect with others.

Georgie’s dedication paid off when she completed the XISC Certificate in Artistic Production and Design in May 2026. She proudly participated in the LCCC graduation ceremony on May 18 at the PPL Center celebrating years of hard work, persistence, and achievement.

Today, she continues to work at Holy Family Senior Living, where she hopes to pursue opportunities with activities staff. She is also exploring other career paths that can benefit from her unique skills and strengths, including positions in daycare settings or at organizations such as the YMCA.

Georgie’s journey was not without obstacles. There were bumps along the road and moments of struggle, but every challenge became an opportunity to learn, adapt, and grow. Challenges became steppingstones toward greater confidence and independence.

Perhaps the most inspiring part of Georgie’s story is that she has shown others what is possible while continuing to discover her own potential. Her journey reminds us that success is not measured solely by a destination, diploma, or job title. Success is measured by the journey of the individual—the growth achieved, the obstacles overcome, and the person one becomes along the way.

Georgianna’s transformation over the past four years has been remarkable. We celebrate her accomplishments, admire her perseverance, and look forward to all that she will achieve in the future. Her story is a powerful reminder that with determination, support, and a willingness to keep growing, extraordinary things are possible. It was an absolute honor to walk beside her on this journey!

# Peer Support

## and Independent Living Skills



### Peer Support

Every other Monday in the PM for 2 hours. This is open to consumers at LVCIL. If you are interested in joining our group, call LVCIL at **610-770-9781 ext. 124**. If you are not a consumer and would like to join us, call and set up an appointment to complete an intake and you can participate in this group.

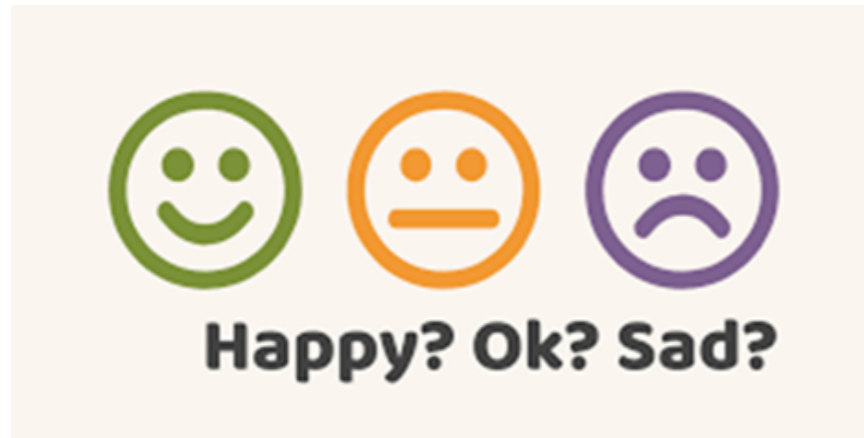
### Independent Living Skills (ILS)

Monday, July 20 at 10 AM join LVCIL staff and the Health Bureau for an informative class on Emergency Preparedness. We will be learning about all types of emergencies and what we can do to be ready in case of an emergency. Come with your questions.

We would like you to RSVP to Debbie at **610-770-9781 ext. 124**. All are invited, whether you are a consumer or not. We just want to make sure we have enough handout materials for everyone.

# How are we doing?

**Take LVCIL's Satisfaction Survey and let us know!**



We are always looking for feedback on ways that we can better support you! Please click on the link to take our satisfaction survey.

**<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/L85NS6C>**

## Interested in being a part of LVCIL?

Check out our job postings for current positions, or visit our website to learn more about volunteer opportunities with us!

## Volunteer

Volunteers are essential to any non-profit organization, including LVCIL! Our volunteers complete endless tasks that contribute to our success as an agency. They also help make our CIL a great place for people with disabilities. Volunteers are always welcome, and everything our volunteers do is much appreciated.

**Please visit our website at: <https://lvcil.org/volunteer/> or scan the QR code below to find out more.**

