

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

Maintaining Independence - Nursing home diversion

DP is a 74-year-old man who is legally blind and has multiple physical disabilities including COPD, diabetes, and obesity. He has been a consumer of SPOKES for multiple years. He lives independently in his own apartment with visits from home care workers twice a week. He uses accessible public transportation to get around town, shop, medical appointments, and visits to SPOKES. He has had serious health problems and was in the hospital several months ago due to cardiac and respiratory distress. During his hospital stay, he expressed fear that he would not be able to go back home and would have to go into Plum Ridge nursing home. Through peer counseling, he decided to make changes to improve his health. In past attempts, he had not been able to stick to diets and always went back to unhealthy habits. The peer support provided through regular check-in appointments with SPOKES staff are helping him stay on track, especially at times when he feels discouraged. Learning Independent Living skills, including incremental changes and healthier options has helped him maintain his health and remain in his own apartment.

Independent Living Skills Training

JJ is a woman in her sixties that has mental health and developmental disabilities. JJ has been in and out of prison and struggled with addiction throughout her life. When JJ came to SPOKES, she was reading and writing on a first-grade level and she wanted to learn to read and write at a level that she felt comfortable with. We set a goal to increase her reading and writing IL skills, although when we started, we did not know what level we would end at. JJ came to SPOKES twice a week for appointments, to work on the IL skills. Each week we would spend one appointment reading, learning to sound out words and the meanings of words. During the other appointment JJ would practice writing words and using them in a sentence. JJ achieved her goal reaching a fifth-grade level in both reading and writing. JJ is now more independent; she no longer must ask someone to read her things, she is able to read independently and understand what she reads.

SUCCESS STORIES FROM SPOKES UNLIMITED CONSUMERS – (PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION INCLUDING NAMES HAVE BEEN REMOVED)

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

Peer Counseling

AG is a woman in her fifties; she has chronic pain, anxiety, PTSD and Auditory processing disorder. When AG came to SPOKES, she met with a peer counselor. She expressed sadness and frustration, as she was no longer able to do things she used to and hoped to learn how to do some of them again. The peer support offered through meeting with a SPOKES staff member who also has disabilities, allowed both staff and AG to discuss experiences, ways of doing things, acceptance of accommodations and creating joy and happiness, just in a different way. Peer support is having someone share their struggles, around disabilities and making joy out of it. It helped AG accept her disability and she now lives life to the fullest.

Self-Advocacy & Information and referral

MM is 51-year-old women with Developmental Disabilities, who had been abused, taken advantage of, told what to do, and controlled for most of her life. MM wanted to work but was scared she would lose her benefits. SPOKES referred her to the Work Incentives Network (WIN), to explore her options of working and maintaining benefits. She was able to gain information so she could work without fear of losing her benefits, allowing her informed choice. MM has also learned self-advocacy skills through services received from SPOKES, including advocating for what she wants and what she needs.

MM also receives services from her Developmental Disabilities provider, they further helped her gain a job along with a job coach. However, when MM started her new job, she was not happy with the way her job coach treated her. She used her advocacy skills with her service provider, job coach and the company that employed the job coach. Using self-advocacy skills, she was able to get a new job coach with a new company. After three weeks of job coaching, she is now working independently. The services provided by SPOKES and WIN program, have led to greater independence for MM. She now advocates for herself, feels like she is a member of her community and has greater self-confidence and self-worth.

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

Youth Transition

AD is a 17-year-old young woman (soon to be 18) with multiple disabilities including FAS, PTSD, Epilepsy, Speech impairment and learning disabilities. She attends the local community college and has a goal of living independently. AD and her sister spent much of her childhood with her grandfather while their parents were not able to care for them. She is currently living with her father with support and guidance from her retired grandfather she transitions to adulthood and gains independence.

Her grandfather encouraged AD to apply for SSI and encouraged her to start the process on her own. On the day before she was to have a phone interview with SSI, her grandfather contacted SPOKES. Initially he vented frustration about "the broken system" and how hard it was for them to get any help. A SPOKES Independent Living Specialist (ILS) went over the process with him and advised that AD should not be expected to go through the interview and application process on her own. The ILS invited them to come into SPOKES for the interview and offered to attend the SSI phone interview with them, which AD accepted. During the interview the SS rep suggested they get started with several forms with assistance from SPOKES. The ILS printed the suggested forms and went over with them, insuring they understood the process and what to do. With guidance from SPOKES ILS, they were able to expedite her application so she will receive benefits as soon as she is 18. She is excited about living on her own and realizing her goal of independence.

Assistive technology

DC is a 77-year-old man who is blind with other physical disabilities, who sometimes uses a wheelchair. He lives alone and has occasional help with household chores, shopping and visits from Home Health. He is a Veteran and a few years ago spent several weeks at American Lake Blind Rehabilitation Center in Tacoma where he learned cane travel, assistive technology and activities of daily living. The VA has supplied him with assistive technology including a computer with needed accessibility features. He also receives services occasionally from Oregon Commission for the Blind (OCB), through the Medford office. He came to SPOKES, when the OCB staff was not available to provide the training, he needed to use his newest iPhone. SPOKES scheduled regular appointments with him to

SUCCESS STORIES FROM SPOKES UNLIMITED CONSUMERS – (PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION INCLUDING NAMES HAVE BEEN REMOVED)

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES – 3/2/2023

provide one on one training. By the second appointment, he had learned some basic skills and shortcuts and was feeling confident enough to explore features on his own. At one appointment, he said, "I've had four iPhones and all this other help, but I've learned more coming here than I have in all those years".