



# Community Living Skills

## Snapshots

## Peer Support

“Words cannot accurately capture the deep level of understanding and support one feels when you find people who ‘get’ you. When you share stories about overcoming misunderstandings of who you are based on your race, gender, and disability with people who have had identical situations in their own lives, it validates your experiences and existence.”

– Vilissa Thompson, disability advocate

### Introduction

The Peer Support session is the second in the Community Living Skills workshop.

The session encourages participants to think about peers as a resource, and how their relationship with their peers is a way to receive and provide support that will help them feel like they are a part of a community.

### Content Summary

**Introduction:** Definitions and possible outcomes of peer support

**Benefits of Peer Support:** Positive feelings, activities to practice sharing thoughts and listening, exploring options, problem solving with peers, exploring possible peer relationships, and limits of peer support

**Finding support:** Types of peer support, choosing peers





**Healthy Community Living** is a program to support opportunities for people with disabilities to live well and participate fully in their communities.

It includes two peer-led independent living skills workshops, **Community Living Skills** and **Living Well in the Community**, which are each divided into ten specific content sessions.

RTC:Rural used an iterative participatory curriculum development (IPCD) process to involve key stakeholder engagement in the development, implementation, and evaluation of each workshop.

Each workshop has been developed through partnerships with people with disabilities with the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) and Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

The HCL Snapshots series explores how partner participation through the IPCD process was fundamental in shaping the HCL program to improve people's wellbeing by providing support, health promotion, education, and opportunities for people with disabilities to succeed in reaching personal goals.



## Learning Objectives

Workshop participants can learn what a peer is and is not, how they might benefit from peer support, where to find peers, and how to identify people in their life who may already be a peer.

## Disability Community Partnership Shaped Content

Many participants who are new to independent living may struggle with the general concept of why building relationships with people with similar life experiences can be of benefit, versus relying solely on professionals, family members and other people in their life they view as authorities. There is also often confusion on the difference between friend relationships and peer relationships, even though they may overlap.

The Peer Support session was shaped by HCL project partners through an iterative participatory curriculum development (IPCD) process. In the pilot phase, participants suggested changes to the program, such as increased time on sharing discussions, that helped both the Peer Support session's flow and also set the stage for participants to connect over the following weeks of the workshop.

Facilitators reported that while taking the Peer Support session, their group "bonded" and it was a "great example of peer support." In another group, a participant discovered that he "wanted a peer group" and realized that he "had a lot to share."

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