

NYSILC

New York State Independent Living Council, Inc.
"Empowering New Yorkers with disabilities"



May 22, 2015

MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

- A.5141 (Santabarbara)/S.4256 (Carlucci) Communication support in Vocational Rehabilitation services

The New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC) and the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) endorse (A.5141 Santabarbara, S.4256 Carlucci) **Communication support in Vocational Rehabilitation services** a bill to direct the Commissioner of the New York State Education Department to promulgate new regulations for ACCES-VR Vocational Rehabilitation services to include communication support among the suite of services currently offered to a wide range of job seekers.

Many individuals with disabilities, including those on the autism spectrum, with traumatic brain injury, learning disabilities, Tourette's Syndrome, and other neuro-communication or speech/language disabilities, may have difficulty with interpersonal communication that can hinder their ability to find and maintain employment, even when they possess job skills, higher education, and access to existing vocational rehabilitation services. Communication support is defined as treatment and services that focus on improving communication-related skills. These include, but are not limited to, dialog strategies for initiating and exiting communication of intent, topic maintenance, dissolving hostile situations resulting from ineffective attempts at independent communication, preparing, strategizing and organizing information for written communication, and preparing for upcoming interpersonal communication situations.

All New Yorkers with disabilities face enough of a challenge when it comes to employment. Effective communication and supports during the vocational rehabilitation is essential. The employment rate of New Yorkers with disabilities ages 18-64 is 32.2%. For this same age range, the full-time, year-round employment rate of New Yorkers with disabilities is 18.8%. The poverty rate for New Yorkers with disabilities (same age range) is 30.3%. The median earnings of New Yorkers with disabilities age 16 and older is \$11,267 less than individuals without disabilities in the State.

NYSILC and NYAIL call on the legislature to pass A.5141/S.4256 to include communication support among the services offered to vocational rehabilitation job seekers for the wide range of disabilities noted above who may have difficulty with interpersonal communication that can hinder their ability to find and maintain employment.

For additional information, contact Brad Williams, NYSILC, at (518) 427-1060 bradw@nysilc.org and Meghan Schoeffling, NYAIL at (518) 465-4650 MSchoeffling@ilny.org. This bill is supported in the NYSILC 2015 Public Policy Agenda: http://www.nysilc.org/images/2015_NYSILC_Public_Policy_Agenda.doc.

The New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC) is an independent, non-profit state council. NYSILC looks to promote independent living for people with disabilities across New York State. The council's primary responsibility is to work with state partners to develop, monitor, and evaluate New York's three-year Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

The New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL) is a statewide membership organization of Independent Living Centers (ILCs), community-based not-for-profit providers of advocacy, services and supports for New Yorkers with disabilities of all ages. ILCs are controlled by, and largely staffed by, people with disabilities. NYAIL strengthens local Independent Living Centers and is a leader in the civil rights movement for all people with disabilities.