



*Two-Day In-Person*

Supported Life Institute presents  
our 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

## Supported Life 2025:

### Navigating Safe Passage through Changing Times

*Empowering All People with Developmental Disabilities  
to be Fully Included in the Community*

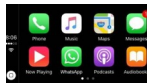
**Wyndham Sacramento Hotel ~ Sacramento, CA**



## Session Descriptions

*Including Session Changes, Cancellations, & Lead Speaker Updates*

Use Topic Icons to Help Choose from 31 Session Choices:



Communication /  
AAC



Personal Power  
& Rights



Family Supports  
/ Transition



Policy & Legislation



Living / Community



Self-Determination  
Program



Organizational  
&  
Staff Development



Health & Wellness

**October 9 - 10, 2025**

**Wyndham Sacramento Hotel**



Health  
&  
Wellness

**1A Relationships Decoded for Transitioned Aged Adults. Kathryn Pedgrift**  
Relationships Decoded is a relationships education program for adults with neuro-developmental differences and other developmental disabilities. The program is designed to teach people about healthy and safe relationships, while also giving them information about abuse and coercion. The development of the program was funded by the Mental Health Services Act in partnership with the Department of Developmental Services.



Family  
Supports /  
Transition

**1B Understanding Special Education. Linda Hernandez, Warmline Family Resource Center, / Family Empowerment Center - Executive Director, Sacramento** Especially for parents and family members of students with I/DD, the head of this local FRC and FEC in the Sacramento region will lead this presentation all about Special Education issues. They will discuss how the IEP Process works. Presenters note that attendees will learn how to become more effective advocates for their child. Also explored is how to navigate dispute resolutions with a School District.



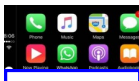
Organiza-  
tional & Staff  
Development

**1C Rate Reform in California. Barry Jardini, California Disability Services Association (CDSA) - Executive Director, Sacramento** This head of CDSA - which represents over 110 organizations that service individuals with IDD - is well-versed in the Law and California Legislation related to vendors / service agencies. He reviews the background that led to California's recent historic investment in disability services for individuals with IDD. He then highlights some of the challenges with implementing those increases, along with changes in service requirements and service code reform that accompanied the rate increases. He emphasizes how these investments were intended to increase access to services and raise wages for the direct support professional workforce.



Self-  
Determination  
Program

**1D The Path to the Self-Determination Program. Rob Lewis, GT Independence, Sturgis, Michigan** This agency will present on their mission, origins, and the services they provide as a Financial Management Services (FMS) organization. This session will explore how FMS providers, families, Independent Facilitators (IF's), and Regional Centers collaborate to support enrollment into the Self-Determination Program (SDP). They provide a clear overview of how a Financial Management Service supports families, what is needed from Regional Centers, & how to begin the SDP journey. Special guest speaker, Rosie Lasca of the Independent Facilitator Training Academy, will share insights into the responsibilities and role of the Independent Facilitator, as well.



Communication  
/ AAC



Personal  
Power &  
Rights

**1E California's Assistive Technology Pilot. John Decker, Alta Calif. Regional Center - Director of Community Services, Sacramento** This broad leading panel of service providers & regional center staff describes efforts to expand the use of assistive technology to deliver remote services for people with IDD. They address selection of Pilot participants, assessment of assistive technology needs, & how service providers help participants meet goals of the program, incl. reducing in-person direct professional supports & expanding opportunities for independence, inclusion, & quality of life. ACRC is currently coordinating the State's 3-year pilot project to expand usage of assistive technology to support independent living for adults with developmental disabilities.



Policy &  
Legislation

**1F Systems and Services. Pam Haney Slinkard, Progressive Employment Concepts, Citrus Heights** This session will provide information and updates on legislation relevant to developmental services at both the state and federal level. Attendees will learn how state and federal legislation interact to fund and govern services for people with I/DD. The session gives updates on current legislation and legislative processes. The state of Medicaid waiver services is addressed, which is so critical to funding for services here. Actionable steps attendees can take for advocacy will be suggested.

Thursday

2:10 – 3:15 Concurrent Sessions 2A - 2F

Supported Life 2025 Conference - Session Summaries



Health  
&  
Wellness

**2A Relationships Decoded for Adolescents. Kathryn Pedgrift** Relationships Decoded for Adolescents is a relationship education program designed to teach youth about healthy and safe relationships. The program includes direct education for youth, as well as supplemental education for parents/care-providers. The development of the program was funded by the Mental Health Services Act in partnerships with the Department of Developmental Services.



Family  
Supports /  
Transition

**2B Transitioning from School to the Adult World: What to Expect, What Support is Available. Pam Haney Slinkard, Progressive Employment Concepts, Citrus Heights** This session will cover *Coordinated Career Pathways* and *Student Services*- focusing on support with employment for transition-aged youth or just leaving transition. Attendees will learn what Pathways is and how to access it (it used to be called "CCP"). Presenters will also delve into what *Student Services* is and how people can access it, as well as introduce and explore an important foundational philosophy that all people who want to work ... Are able to work ... given they have access to what they Need.



Health  
&  
Wellness

**2C Person-Centered Thinking & Self-Care. Jessica Noble, Compass SLS, CFS & ILS - Person-Centered Training/Department of Innovation and Expansion, Redding** Self-care means intentional actions people take to maintain or improve their physical, mental, & emotional health & wellness. Person-Centered Thinking tools help identify personal objectives, needs, & preferences. These are used to design tailored Person-Centered Plans encouraging self-care. Person-Centered tools can help to clearly establish a person's daily routines and their specific support needs around eating healthy, exercising, getting enough sleep, engaging in hobbies, and connecting with loved ones, in order to promote their health and wellness.



Self-  
Determination  
Program

**2D Self-Determination Program Basics and Questions. Areta Guthrey, The Disability Information Network, Citrus Heights** California has embarked on a program of Self-Determination as an alternative to traditional regional center services. For some, this has been an enormous, positive breakthrough. For others, it has been a confusing, lengthy process. This presentation addresses the basic principles and processes of the Self-Determination Program. Then the session focuses on some of the problems that have been reported, and how to navigate the system. A question-and-answer time will round out the session for anyone considering the program, or who are already participating.

canceled

**2E *Canceled by Speaker:* Deaf and Hard of Hearing Experiences and Advocacy** Jeremy Murphy, SCLARC, Los Angeles



Policy &  
Legislation

**2F The 2025 Legislative Story: The National and State Budget and Bill Outcomes. Roxy Ortiz, Dir. of Governmental Affairs and Tony Anderson, Associate Director, Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), Sacramento** This session describes the national budget process & advocacy efforts to save Medicaid. It will include the Governor's proposed budget in January, the May Revision, & the final outcome. Then as much as is known, presenters discuss the impact & potential impact of the Federal budget on the State budget. A run-down follows on legislative outcomes affecting our field including some operational bills impacting providers as nonprofits or standard businesses.

Thursday

3:25 – 4:30 Concurrent Sessions 3A - 3F

Supported Life 2025 Conference - Session Summaries



Organizational & Staff Development

**3A 5 Ways to Increase Employee Retention in Challenging Times, Peter Leidy, peterleidy.com, Madison, Wisconsin** This experienced speaker says: “In workshops, conversations & trainings over several decades with disability support professionals, I ask: *In a field with high turnover and low pay, why do you stay? What keeps you coming back?* In virtually every group – especially critical for lowest paid positions in our system – there are 5 common responses - heard over & over, in all parts of U.S.—and abroad . . . I’m convinced they are the real truth of why people decide to stay. If organizations take these to heart & act on them, I know it would reduce turnover. Let’s explore these 5 areas & how your organization can boost retention.



Personal Power & Rights

**3B Supported Decisionmaking - Financial Decisionmaking. Teresa Anderson, California Policy Center for IDD (CPCIDD), Rancho Cordova** The Executive Director of this statewide policy organization will provide an overview of Supported Decision Making, requirements for a supported decision making agreement, and how people are using it to make important life decisions. The session will explore using SDM to make financial decisions, increase financial literacy, and autonomy. The role and requirements of the supporter will also be discussed.



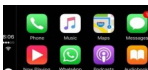
Health & Wellness

**3C Still Disabled: Survival at the Margins. René López, Autistic, Queer, Disability Advocate & Activist, San Anselmo** This presenter “invites participants into the raw, honest journey of navigating invisible disability, cultural stigma, and systemic harm. Through personal stories and spoken word poetry,” the presenter “explores what it means to survive in environments that expect silence, masking, or compliance. Attendees will reflect on how ableism and power operate and explore ways to build spaces that truly support, include, and believe neurodivergent people, a critical discussion for anyone committed to true inclusion and equity.”

SDP

Self-Determination Program

**3D The Best Kept Secret: Self-Determination = Future of Disability Services. Kristianna Moralls, Self-Determination Institute, Glendale** These presenters say: “Self-determination is one of the best-kept secrets in regional center services—a life-changing option that places individuals and families in charge of their own lives. This session will trace the roots of self-direction in the United States, from early pilot programs to the launch of California’s Self-Determination Program (SDP). We’ll explore why this model was created, how it works, and what outcomes we’re seeing today. With increased choice, flexibility, and control, SDP is reshaping what’s possible.”



Communication / AAC

**3E A Day in the Life Kristine O'Keefe, CTEC - Communication Technology Education Center / Supported Life Institute, Sacramento** This session focuses on AAC, or “Augmentative and Alternative Communication.” Each panel presenter will illustrate how using their communication devices (electronic AAC) affects their daily lives. They each describe, in their own words, how their AAC device brings both opportunities and challenges during communication. The session addresses the importance of early introduction of speech devices, as well as how AAC users can best be successful when communicating with their device.



Policy & Legislation

**3F Legislative Advocacy: Organize, Communicate, and Show Up. Tony Anderson, Association of Regional Center Agencies (ARCA), Sacramento** This session discusses best practices for public advocacy, such as effective Visits with Legislators, Testimony, Letters, Electronic Media, Social Media, and more. This presenter reviews different approaches to do legislative advocacy, practice communications techniques, and develop ways for “Getting and Keeping Connections.” Tools include: How to set meetings with your elected representatives and make them effective. How to organize others to build power to advance your campaign. Plus how and why to use communication strategies in your advocacy.

Health  
&  
Wellness

**4A Re-Thinking Challenging Behavior.** Peter Leidy, [peterleidy.com](http://peterleidy.com), Madison, Wisconsin Many children and adults considered to have “challenging behavior” get the label through actions and events that could have been avoided. Unwanted behavior is often caused – unintentionally – by the system, the team or the behavior plan. When people feel lonely and disconnected, when we fail to imagine the person’s point of view, when a “home” does not feel safe or “homey,” when a place where someone spends the day is not a good match – the likelihood of unwanted behavior increases. Through real examples (and even some humor) this session will explore ways of reducing power struggles, critical incidents, and crises related to behavior.

Organiza-  
tional & Staff  
Development

**4B What We've Seen: 3 Years of HCBS Implementation.** Jacqueline Lawton, Alo Consultation, Benicia Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) is the new landscape changing developmental services as a whole. Through storytelling, these speakers share what they have seen in the past three years as independent consultants working with all stakeholders - through regional center HCBS funding. They share their takeaways from deep involvement with agencies responding to HCBS expectations; tell about the various stakeholders involved in the complex system supporting HCBS; and illuminate what they would like to see happen to bring HCBS settings and providers to the next level in California.

Family  
Supports /  
Transition

**4C How To Build Financial Stability Using CalABLE.** Thomas Martin, CalABLE, Sacramento CalABLE is California's savings and investment program for people with disabilities. The Executive Director of CalABLE, in this session, will emphasize the importance of financial planning and how to use CalABLE accounts now and in the future. *BUT he will go beyond the basics.* The presenter will explore much more: qualified disability expenses; the investment options; account features and enhancements; ways to operate the account. The presenter hopes to teach attendees how to become more financially independent. The session will conclude with a Question & Answer session.

Self-  
Determination  
Program

**4D Navigating SDP as a Traditionally Vended Service Provider.** Sandra Van Scotter, Co-Chairperson - KRC SDP LVAC, Ridgecrest This presenter is a parent to two Adult Autistic sons: one is served by the Regional Center system, participating in the Self-Determination Program; the other is not. She also serves 3 Self-Determination Program Participants as a Direct Support Provider (DSP). The session offers a little history of the Self-Determination Program and how access changed in 2021 for Traditionally Vended Service Providers when SDP became available to all eligible people served by Regional Centers. Learn how a contract changes with Regional Centers you are Vended with and how Self-Determination gives the Traditionally Vended Service Provider freedom, too!

Living /  
Community

**4E Affordable Housing: We Need More!** Tracey Miller, Chair, Client Advisory Committee - ARCA - Association of Regional Center Agencies, Bakersfield The CAC of the Statewide ARCA organization feels strongly about the multiple issues related to Affordable Housing in the lives of people served by the Regional Centers that they are advisors to. Presenters begin with What is Affordable Housing? Then discuss 5 Steps to Advocating for it. They suggest ways to find Local Resources & How to Locate Your Local Government Office to Advocate ... by Telling Your Story. City Affordable Housing Hearings are talked about as places to make a difference. Newsletters & Resources are identified to help attendees keep up-to-date on affordable housing issues.

Policy &  
Legislation

**4F Politics, Disability and Accessible Healthcare.** Areta Guthrey, The Disability Information Network, Citrus Heights This parent & attorney notes: “today, access to healthcare for people with disabilities is uncertain. Our advocacy is more important than ever.” This session is an update on the current status of Medicare & Medicaid funding. Then she will offer some tools to advocate for accessibility in healthcare settings for all people with disabilities - including invisible disabilities & mental health services in addition to physical access. The session intends to benefit all participants whether they are seasoned professionals ... or new advocates.



**Friday**

**1:45 – 2:55 Concurrent Sessions 5A - 5F**



Family  
Supports /  
Transition

**5A Rough Seas Ahead, Proceed with Caution! Jayne Chase, Florence, Alabama** Put on your life jackets and Proceed With Caution to this interactive session as the presenter relates how Rough Seas make good sailors and how Making Waves can often be our only option when Navigating Safe Passage Through Changing Times. She will share the Rough Seas she has sailed, the Waves she has created and the shipwrecks she has somehow survived sailing ahead of her son seeking to ensure his Safe Passage.



Health  
&  
Wellness

**5B Sexual Health Rights and Complex Needs. Shanya Luther, Among Friends, LLC, McMinnville, Oregon** This presenter says: “this session highlights international efforts to recognize and protect universal sexual health rights and promote rights-based, medically accurate, and trauma-informed strategies and solutions. We’ll demonstrate why social-sexual support services are critical for vulnerable populations and people with cognitive challenges and/or complex needs, and we’ll illustrate how they lead to innumerable positive outcomes for the person and their support team; including: improving quality of life, reducing trauma and retraumatization, improving staff retention, preventing dangerous and challenging behaviors, and much more!”



Personal  
Power &  
Rights

**5C Access = Power: Dismantling Ableism, Fostering Belonging at Work. Riana Hardin, State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), Sacramento** This presentation explores what “disability” really means and how ableism - such as tokenism, lack of accommodations, or disbelief in lived experiences - creates barriers in the workplace. These self-advocate/professional presenters share real examples, discuss why anti-ableism matters, and offer practical steps anyone can take to build a more inclusive, welcoming environment. They say: “Learn how to be an ally, support diverse talents, and make small changes that add up to big impact.”



Self-  
Determination  
Program

**5D FMS (Financial Management Services) Facts and Fiction. Tanya Hernandez, PPL, Highland, CA** Teamwork: Daniel Meadows, self-advocate who has experience navigating the Self-Determination Program (SDP) & working with a Financial Management Service (FMS) ... joins an FMS rep & former regional center service coordinator ... to share how an FMS can help with the budget in the Self-Determination Program. FMS’s are key partners helping people to manage their money by tracking spending, helping you follow payroll rules, & any employment or program rules. Attendees get to learn about differences between FMS models. Presenters invite advocates, families, community partners ... anyone wanting to know more about how an FMS works.



Health  
&  
Wellness

**5E Social Recreation, Renard Stanford, Advocates Advisory Committee/SCLARC - South Central Los Angeles Regional Center** This self-advocate presenter notes: “My last session when I spoke at May Self-Advocacy Conference was about romantic relationships. I will talk in this session about Social activities that may or may not include this. Couples start out as friends. This session tells how it takes time to become friends. To start: meet someone, introduce yourself. Take time to know one another. Exchange info, call up your friend only one time a day. Be respectful. Find a time you both can hang out, based on your interests. Have ways to maintain a healthy relationship. Decide whether you want to become a couple. Not everyone is ok to be your partner.”



Organiza-  
tional & Staff  
Development

**5F Beyond Warm Bodies: Building a Mission-Aligned Workforce. Melanie Bazile, Compass, Redding** Staffing continues to be one of the most pressing challenges service providers face - but what if we moved beyond just “finding people” to finding the right people? In this session, leaders from this agency share their journey toward improving hiring & retention practices to better match staff with needs of individuals they support, culture of the organization, & mission of the work. Early missteps to game-changing insights helped the agency ask better questions, using real-time data to track what matters. Participants learn how to move from reaction to intentional design—focusing on long-term impact, not just short-term coverage.

Supported Life 2025 Conference - Session Summaries

**Friday**

**3:05 – 4:15 Concurrent Sessions 6A - 6E**



**Personal  
Power &  
Rights**

**6A Express Yourself At Your Next IPP Meeting. Kaitlin Olson, Alo Consultation, Benicia**

In this session, according to these speakers, “we will talk about what you want more of in your life & ways to communicate that to your support team. Planning & communication tools can help make sure your voice is the strongest in the room. Join us for a hands-on session to explore your dreams & desires and fill out a communication tool to share with those in your life or at your next IPP meeting. HCBS isn’t just about talking about your rights. It’s about seeing those rights happen in your everyday life. Let’s get to it!”



**Health  
&  
Wellness**

**6B Recognizing Sexually Maladaptive Behaviors. Shanya Luther, Among Friends, LLC, McMinnville, Oregon**

The Session presenter notes: “Sexuality is a birth-to-death experience and sexual exploration and play are considered a natural part of a person’s development – from infancy into adulthood. However, there are some sexual behaviors that go beyond harmless curiosity. This training outlines healthy, unhealthy, and dangerous signs in sexual development. Learn more skills for how to respond if someone you support is exhibiting concerning sexual behaviors, including the importance of responding to concerning sexual behaviors as a team.”



**Living /  
Community**

**6C Voices of the Community In Home and At Work. Harrison Lane, Meristem / Transformative Autism Program, Fair Oaks**

Attendees will learn from neurodiverse individuals themselves on the work that they do in this workshop, as the moderator / presenter asks a panel some questions related to life and work. Job readiness skills needed to get and keep a job are explained. Panelists discuss what it is like to have multiple jobs & ideas, how to be successful, struggles of getting & keeping a job while at the same time in college. The panel tells how to deal with anxiety and what that feels like for someone with a disability, including being uncertain what you want to do.



**Self-  
Determination  
Program**

**6D The Nuts and Bolts of Advocacy and Self-Determination. Daniel Meadows,**

**Supported Life Institute, Sacramento** This session will be an exploration of the personal empowerment that comes through self-determination and how that can lead to stronger advocacy for yourself and others. The experienced presenter will share his longtime “lived experience” with Self-Determination and with Advocacy to inspire and support the journey that others may be on toward personal growth and fulfillment. He says: “Learn how to become empowered to chart your own course (‘...Through Changing Times’). Also how self-determination can lead to greater self-advocacy and leadership.”



**Organiza-  
tional & Staff  
Development**

**6E Tried, True & Transformational: Tools to Listen, Learn and Thrive. Melanie, Bazile, Compass, Redding**

Presenters state: “Whether you’re new to person-centered thinking or looking to level up your leadership toolkit, this session will have something for you. Human service leaders need practical tools that help teams listen deeply, learn continuously, act with clarity. We share a collection of tools we’ve used and adapted... including frameworks from Person-Centered Thinking, business strategy, and leadership development. This “toolbelt extravaganza” will ... spark reflection, capture learning and influence connection and action, and improve root-cause thinking and decision-making... Participants will walk away with practical tools they can begin using immediately - with staff, with people supported, and within cross-functional teams.

**Supported Life 2025 Conference - Session Summaries**