
E-LIFELINES – WINTER 2020

Goodbye 2020... Hello New Year!

Dear Friends,

The year 2020 has indeed been one for the record books. No one could ever have imagined or planned for this year beforehand. As I look back, I greatly admire the work our amazing team has accomplished in spite of this devastating global pandemic.



Since mid-March, there has not been a day that did not bring unprecedented challenges. Yet our team managed to face each challenge with unique and creative solutions.

While we have been working remotely for 23% of the year and working 58% of the year under various restrictions, we still managed to impact 1,642 lives!

Staff have remained connected to our consumers via phone, email and other real-time technology. We have continued our equipment loan closet program through a curbside pick-up and drop-off service. We were able to provide 82 consumers with various assistance needs through a grant from INCIL (Illinois Network of Centers for Independent Living) via the Chicago Community Trust.

During this highly unusual year, we were also able to:

- Advocate extensively for accessible transportation, and as a result our transit agency pledged that 100% of its stops will be accessible by 2024 (a four-year period instead of their original twenty-plus year plan), and have all progress made transparent on their website
- Engage local council members in a town hall regarding transportation issues
- Host a statewide advocacy event
- Participate in over 600 hours of staff training
- Create and distribute information to consumers seeking food resources during the pandemic
- Convert the Fast Track Transition curriculum to an online format in record time and assist 33 youth with disabilities learn how to live independent lives after high school
- Provide 155 people with low-vision or blindness the technology and training needed to remain living independently in their own homes
- Successfully advocate for accessible outdoor dining arrangements in Pontiac and Normal

- Hold our first ever virtual Annual Meeting with special guest speaker Brandon Farbstein
- Utilize virtual meeting technology and other creative ways to successfully move four people out of nursing homes and into their own home (number five is almost there!)

While we are thankful for so many successes this year, we know there is also much yet to do. Too many people with disabilities still reside in institutions (ex: nursing homes) where the risk of getting the coronavirus is far greater than if they were in their own home. LIFE CIL has always advocated for the right to home and community based services for people of all types of disabilities of any age. We will continue to do so. If you would like to learn more on how you can help with our advocacy efforts, please email conan@lifecil.org.

As we wrap up this year, there is one more thing that we are thankful for – **YOU!** Without you, we would not be here. You help us reach our goals and fulfill our mission. Your support is crucial to our success. Thank you! We wish you and your family a safe, healthy and happy holiday season and look forward to seeing you next year.

Sincerely,

Rickielee Benecke

Rickielee Benecke, Executive Director



Advocacy Matters


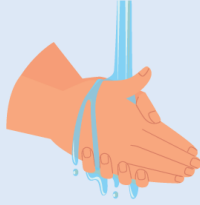
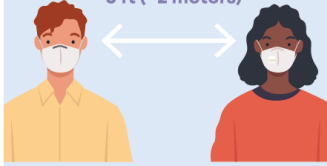
Know your rights – Gain confidence – SPEAK UP!

Have you run into trouble with accessing a place of business, indoor or outdoor restaurant seating, or using a sidewalk? Are you worried about being able to use your polling place when you vote? Is there a business or company that you think could use education in disability etiquette?

Please, speak up! Contact Conan Calhoun, Disability Rights Advocate, to learn how to advocate for yourself and others in your community (conan@lifecil.org, or 309-663-5433). Advocacy can be as easy as a phone call to say “the sidewalk by my apartment is impassable in my wheelchair/with my walker, etc... and I’d like it to be fixed.”

Let's all make 2021 a healthier year!

3 W's to reduce risk of COVID-19

Wear a mask 	Wash your hands 	Watch your distance 6 ft (~2 meters) 
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COVID-19 RESOLVE TO SAVE LIVES Vital Strategies | More info at [PreventEpidemics.org](https://www.PreventEpidemics.org) #KnowCOVID #PreventEpidemics

Additional information about the virus is available on these websites:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/)

[World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/)

- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- When in public, wear a face covering over your nose and mouth.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20+ seconds.



Tackling the Flu

By Dr. Karen Babos

Flu season is here. The flu shot is even more important this year because of the spread of COVID-19. The best way to reduce your risk of catching the flu is to get a flu shot every year. Getting the flu vaccine can reduce your risk of flu illness, hospitalizations and death.

A flu shot is recommended for everyone six months of age and older, even if you are healthy.

Please contact your doctor to schedule your flu shot. Your doctors and pharmacies have taken steps to make their offices and stores safe for you to visit during the pandemic.

You cannot catch the flu from the flu shot. The flu shot is made from an inactive virus. The vaccine may cause mild symptoms like achy muscles or a low-grade fever due to an immune response from your body. It takes up to two weeks for you to be fully protected after you receive the shot.

Good hygiene habits help stop the spread of germs and prevent illness, like the flu. Here are some tips to help you stay healthy.

- Wear a mask when you are near people other than your immediate household
- Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds
- Don't touch your face. If you touch a germ and then touch your face, you could catch the flu
- Avoid people who are sick
- Talk to your family. Teach them how to prevent the spread of germs.
- Make sure you get your flu shot.

People with a chronic condition are at a higher risk for flu and COVID-19 complications. Talk to your doctor today about how you can get your flu shot. Many pharmacies offer the flu shot as well.

Flu and COVID-19

The flu and COVID-19 are both respiratory illnesses but are caused by different viruses. You can get both the flu and COVID-19 at the same time. The flu shot will reduce your chance of getting the flu. It will not protect against COVID-19. Reducing your risk of flu can help reduce pressure on the health care system.

Dr. Karen Babos, D.O., M.B.A., is the Chief Medical Officer for Molina Healthcare of Illinois. Dr. Babos is a triple-board certified in internal medicine, geriatric medicine and palliative care. Dr. Babos and her team seek to improve health care for members.

Personal Assistant Program still taking applications!

Are you looking for a rewarding job and interested in gaining valuable work experience? People with disabilities throughout Illinois are seeking mature, reliable and honest people to work as their personal assistants.

What is a personal assistant?

A personal assistant is someone who helps individuals with a disability with routine activities of daily living in their homes. Duties can include personal care, meal preparation, shopping or other duties which are dependent on a person's needs.

Personal Assistant Tasks

Personal Assistants provide support and services that enable individuals with disabilities to remain at home. Some tasks include:

- Personal care such as bathing, bathroom assistance, dressing and grooming
- Assistance with medical needs such as transferring and mobility exercises
- Homemaking services such as cleaning, cooking, shopping, budgeting and light secretarial work
- Running errands and setting up transportation

Benefits

Some benefits and opportunities of becoming a personal assistant include:

- Pays \$13.48 per hour
- Flexible schedule
- Personal and professional development

How to Get Started

LIFE CIL holds regular orientations for individuals who are interested in becoming a personal assistant. The orientation covers communication skills, care techniques, information about the employee and employer relationship, and much more. Due to COVID-19, all orientations are being held by video-call (e.g.: Zoom).

Visit our website and download the Personal Assistant application [here](#). Fill it out and follow the instructions on returning it to the center. Vicky Hogan will contact you once she receives your application. Note: our mail is being held until we return to the office in 2021, so you will not be contacted until the New Year. (Full link: <http://www.lifecil.org/employment/personal-assistant/>)

LIFE CIL Closed for Winter Holidays

LIFE CIL is normally closed from December 24 until the first working day after New Year's Day. Right now, we know things are anything but normal. The start of 2021 will be a bit different given the current circumstances with the pandemic we are still battling.

Our **Pontiac** office will be closing early on Tuesday, December 22nd (at 12:30 p.m.) and remain closed for the winter holidays.

Our **Bloomington** office will be closed starting Thursday, December 24 for the winter holidays.

Normally, our offices would reopen on Monday, January 4, 2021. However, due to the increase in COVID-19 infection rates, we are taking additional precautions for the safety of our consumers and team members. **LIFE CIL's offices will remain closed until Monday, January 11, 2021.** Any phone messages left will be returned when our staff return to remote work on Monday, January 4.

Staff will be working remotely Monday, January 4 – Friday, January 8, 2021. Staff will be available via phone and email during this time.

There will be **no equipment loan services** offered Thursday, December 24 through Friday, January 8, 2021. Equipment loan services at our Bloomington office **will resume on Monday, January 11, 2021** as a curbside pick-up and drop-off service (by appointment). Any equipment due during this time will be automatically renewed.

Given these uncertain times, our plans may change at any time. Follow us on Facebook to get immediate updates (www.facebook.com/lifecil).



LOCATIONS



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Pontiac

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If a friend sent this newsletter to you and you'd like to be added to our email list, give us a call or email (brianne@lifecil.org) We never sell or give away your information!

Learn more about LIFE CIL, events, advocacy opportunities, & more at: www.lifecil.org and <https://www.facebook.com/lifecil>