

PATHWAYS TO INDEPENDENCE

June 24th, 2020, 1:30pm to 3:30pm

Zoom Virtual Conferencing Meeting Notes

Hosted By:

Paul Gauthier

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

Ruth Marzetti

Technology For Living

Guest Speakers:

Ean Price

Technology For Living

Dalton Finlay

Right Fit Project

Individualized Funding Resource Centre Society

More than ever, people with disabilities must come together as a unified group in society. How we support and help each other through crisis will strengthen us as a community and as individuals. Living independently is a choice and comes with additional challenges; through unification people with disabilities make a difference; each voice is important.

[Pathways To Independence July Meeting to be held July 29th, 2020 1:30pm to 3:30pm](#)

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The goal of this meeting was for Peers to come together and share information and updates on current issues facing people with disabilities. The meeting was attended by approximately 85 people.

Technology for Living – Ean Price

- a. Technology for Independent Living (TIL) is a member driven program which provides Assistive Devices and Home Automation solutions for people, with limited mobility, in their homes.
- b. There are 600+ members throughout British Columbia
- c. TIL services are provided to people with limited mobility at no cost
 - I. Services include assessment, installation, equipment (long term loan) and follow up
- d. Eligibility
 - I. 19 years of age or over
 - II. Live in your own home (own or rent)
 - III. Limited mobility
 - IV. Reside in British Columbia
- e. TIL Biomed or Technician will provide virtual (Zoom, telephone) or in-home installation and training.
- f. A typical set up is in the Living room and Bedroom
- g. Google Assistant is commonly accessed by a Nest Mini or cell phone.
 - I. Typical commands:
 - i. What time is it?
 - ii. Set an alarm for 8:00am

- iii. What's the temperature outside?
 - iv. Turn off the lights
 - v. Turn on the computer
 - vi. Lock the front door
- h. **Broadcast** is a "walkie-talkie" feature sending voice messages to everyone in your home.
 - I. Message a caregiver from one room to another
 - II. They can respond via the Google Mini
- i. **Lights and Plugs (Basic Start Ups)**
 - I. Smart Lights adjust brightness by Google Assistant or routine
 - i. Just say "Okay Google, turn on the lights"
 - ii. Routine: every day at 3:00pm turn on lights at 50%
 - II. Smart Plugs control items such as fans, lamps, etc.
 - i. Just say "Okay Google, turn on the Bedroom fan"
- j. **Smart Blinds & Smart Shades**
 - I. They are easy to install and detachable. No screws!
 - i. Just say "Okay Google, open the living room blinds to 50%"
 - ii. Routine: every night close the blinds
- k. **Smart Lock**
 - I. Keep your existing key
 - II. Lock your home independently
 - III. Unlock your door so you can receive guests
 - IV. Automatically unlock your door when you come home
 - V. A great feature to give caregivers the ability to lock/unlock your door
 - VI. Voice command example
 - i. "Okay Google, lock the front door"
- l. **Smart Door Bell and Smart Thermostats** can provide increased independence
 - I. "Okay Google, show me the front doorbell"
 - II. "Okay Google, set the temperature to 30 degrees"
- m. **Nest Hubs** can be used to monitor your safety and provide you with peace of mind
 - I. "Okay Google, show me front door camera"
- n. **SwitchBots** mechanically controls a rocker switch – like a little finger
 - I. Easy to install with peel and stick mounting!
 - II. Can be controlled with a voice command through Alexa, Google Assistant, etc.
 - III. When giving commands like "Okay Google, turn on the fireplace" or "Okay Google, make mattress soft/hard", the finger in the SwitchBot will come out and push the button
 - IV. You can turn on your fireplace in the evening on a chilly winter's night!
- o. **Entertainment**
 - I. Control your TV with Google Assistant.
 - II. "Okay Google, turn the volume up" or "Okay Google, watch Lost in Space on Netflix"
- p. **Set yourself up for a relaxing evening at home!**
 - I. Close the blinds
 - II. Turn on the lamp
 - III. Dim the ceiling lights
 - IV. Turn on the TV/Netflix

- q. **Go to bed on your terms!**
- I. Set alarm clock
 - II. Lock the front door
 - III. Turn on humidifier
 - IV. Turn on bedroom fan
 - V. Turn off all the lights
- r. **Contact Technology for Living**
- I. eprice@technologyforliving.org
 - II. til@technologyforliving.org
 - III. Telephone: 604-326-0175
 - IV. www.technologyforliving.org

Questions & Answers

- Q. If you are a member are you charged for this?
A. If you meet the criteria, it's free!
- Q. Can we answer voice calls on Nest Mini?
A. It must be from a Google Duo Account
- Q. Are Switchbots and Blind devices available through TIL?
A. Yes, Absolutely!
- Q. Does a Smart Lock work with a TIL Door Opener
A. We are in the process of testing compatibility between these two devices.
- Q. Is this technology available in Victoria?
A. Yes, it's available throughout British Columbia
- Q. Can I operate smart home devices without having to use my voice?
A. Yes! Switch access, eye tracking, motion sensors, etc.
- Q. What happens if there is a power outage?
A. Battery backup can be helpful.

WiFi connection would be offline, but Bluetooth would still work. For example, unlocking a smart door lock with your cell phone.

- Q. Are any of these switches compatible with the GEWA remote?
A. GEWA is strictly infrared and won't work with WiFi devices.

TIL has other ways to control smart home set up with simple things like to turn light on and off using the GEWA.

- Q. How much of this is possible using Alexa, Galaxy and Google?
A. Everything shown in this presentation works!

Q. What about unlocking patio doors, would this technology work for that?

A. TIL is currently looking into unlocking patio doors and window openers.

Q. I am a bit mobile and not sure I am eligible, But I can't close my blinds or turn on my fireplace. I have a keypad to lock the door.

A. Eligibility is a limitation to ability

The only people who are not eligible are able bodied individuals who can do it on their own

You would be a happily welcomed member!

Q. Is it possible to have a TIL member come to my home to brainstorm what is possible in my home?

A. Yes, but there is also a lot that can be assessed over the telephone and by Zoom

Q. Do you work only with persons with physical disabilities or do you also work with persons with memory issues?

A. At this point we only work with persons with physical disabilities

Q. Regarding the door lock, is there a better way to understand a speech impediment?

A. Try bringing the Google Mini closer to you

An earpiece helps for some

Custom voice commands can be used if Google has a hard time understanding you

- I. Substitute words
- II. I say "Vampire" to close my blinds!

Other solutions include Chameleon and Eye tracking

The Chameleon is a device used to access google home if voice command does not work for you. You plug in one switch, you have access up to 30 commands, everything that you can use to control your google home.

Q. Is Google controllable through an App instead of just your voice?

A. Yes, the Google Home App is available on Android and iOS.

Example: Tap on the bedroom light symbol

Q. I use Google Home; is there a way my caregiver can adjust the heat using google home?

A. Yes, a caregiver can give a voice command or physically adjust the dial

Peer Comments

- *"I have devices everywhere!"*
- *"Smart Shades are amazing"*
- *"I use Alexa in the bathroom for a voice-controlled lift and google for lights"*
- *"The Switchbots are very cute; Ean hooked me up with 2 and they're super useful"*
- *"We have two openers at our place, and I love them. One on the front door so I can get outside and then one going into the garage"*

The Open Door Program – Paul Gauthier

- a. Open Doors to Independence is a BC based program available through the Technology For Independent Living (TIL) program at Technology For Living.
 - I. There is a lot of new independence that comes from the Open Door Program
 - II. Not only does it give a person new freedom, but also the ability to have privacy as well
- b. The program is available to all BC residents who face physical challenges leaving or entering their home, apartment or building without an automatic door opener
 - I. TIL's engineering technologists will visit your home and discuss your requirements
- c. This program is made possible through funding received from the BC Rehab Foundation and the Kinsmen Foundation of BC
 - I. Door Openers vary in cost depending on functionality and range in cost from approximately \$1500 to \$3500
 - II. The application process is not complicated
 - III. There may be a wait list depending upon demand
- d. Renovation to apartments and houses owned by other parties will require their authorization
- e. Information: <https://technologyforliving.org/news/the-open-door-program/>
 - I. Watch the Video!!
- f. Application: <https://technologyforliving.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/TIL-Door-Opener-ApplicationOctober2019.pdf>

Peer Comments

- *"Door openers are the greatest invention ever!"*
- *"Great privilege to have"*
- *"Makes life a lot easier to be independent!"*

The Right Fit Project – Dalton Finlay

- a. The Right Fit Project began as a pilot project in April of 2017; created to support systemic change and innovation through a collaborative, ground-up approach led by Disability Alliance BC, in partnership with the IFRC, BC Housing, The City of Vancouver, Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction
- b. The pilot ended on March 31st, 2020. Municipal grant funding from The City of Vancouver and federal funding through the Vancity Reaching Home program was received in 2020 in order for the project to continue throughout the Lower Mainland.
 - I. These two funders fully support the project and its goals of connecting wheelchair users with accessible homes, promoting independence and helping to prevent people from entering into facilities
- c. The Right Fit Project does more than simply connect wheelchair users with accessible housing;
 - I. assists clients to obtain required assistive equipment related to the new home
 - II. Fast-tracking individuals who are on the Persons with Disability (or PWD) benefits program and work with their OT's to complete the process for the equipment allowing them to live independently
 - III. The program provides assistance to those persons applying for home support
- d. We work closely with housing providers and clients to ensure the placement is a Right Fit for everyone
 - I. Assess available units with Accessibility Checklists

- II. Assist in application process and meetings
- III. Vacancy advertising
- e. The Right Fit Project has matched individuals and families to accessible homes
 - I. Significant and positive impact on lives
 - II. Increased level of independence
 - III. Improved quality of life
 - IV. Opportunity to live closer to family and supports
 - V. After years of living in non-accessible homes our client's wellbeing have been profoundly improved
- f. Eligibility
 - I. Be a wheelchair user
 - II. Registered with BC Housing
- g. Contact
 - I. If you or anyone you know, might benefit from the Right Fit Project, please contact Dalton Finlay at rightfit@ifrcsociety.org
 - II. Telephone 604-777-7576
 - III. Website: www.RightFitProject.org

Right Fit Project – Reaching Home – Paul Gauthier

- a. Homelessness is often the result of systemic barriers that include a
 - I. lack of affordable and appropriate housing,
 - II. help for people with developmental and physical challenges
- b. Reaching Home is a community-based program aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness by providing direct support
 - I. People, and families, are assessed based on need, including disabilities
 - II. Decisions for priority housing are made to house people as soon as possible
 - Priority populations include people who are highly vulnerable
- c. People in wheelchairs who are unable to find accessible housing, can find themselves living in shelters or congregated housing environments
- d. With the Right Fit Project, Dalton and the team will be working with Reaching Home clients for that final step in housing placement
 - I. If you know of anyone who is facing homelessness, or has become homeless, please let us know so we can connect them to the Reaching Home process.
 - II. Contact Dalton at rightfit@ifrcsociety.org

Federal Wage Top Up

- a. The ACE Executive met with the Ministry of Health on June 11th, 2020
 - I. As of that date, the funding has not been released by the Federal government to the provinces
 - II. The division of the gross amount to the individual provinces is still in negotiation
 - III. The province themselves are still working out the logistics on how this will be delivered to the Health Authorities and how they in turn will release it to CSIL Employers
 - IV. CSIL Employers should expect the release of the funds to be September, 2020 or later.
- b. Key Issue 1
 - I. CSIL Employers are assessed care hours by the Health Authorities

- II. Many CSIL Employers must “stretch” their allotted care hours in order to obtain the level of care they require, and this is done with the full authority and knowledge of the Health Authorities
- III. We have requested that the consideration of the funding be based upon payroll hours and not the approved CSIL hours
- c. Key Issue 2
 - I. Ace Executive drew the Ministry’s attention to the fact that CSIL Employers will incur employer costs in addition to the \$4 per hour top up given to their employees
 - II. All employers must pay their usual remittances of CPP, EI, Vacation Pay and in addition, costs related to Statutory Holidays
 - III. Requested that employer costs also be funded
 - IV. UPDATE: Family Leaders is a group of individuals representing organizations which support people with disabilities meet weekly
 - I. July 6th 2020 meeting; information was shared with the group that the Ministry of Health will not be providing CSIL Employers with “additional funds to cover employer costs” and that it is our understanding that only income tax will be required to be deducted.
 - II. Once a formal notification is received, ACE Executive will release that communication to CSIL Employers
- d. Key Issue 3
 - I. All employees, regardless of current status of employment, need to be factored into this calculation regardless of termination, either by employee or the employer
- e. The ACE Executive hopes to meet with the Ministry again soon to receive new updates
 - I. Will remain in close touch with the people working on this
- f. Larger organizations are giving out the top up and some CSIL Employers are doing this from their own surplus

Questions and Answers

Q. A caregiver has been laid off because of COVID and is getting CERB; if we get the top up value will that be affected?

A. We will not know until we get a letter to confirm how they will be distributing funds among CSIL Employers

In relation to the \$600 support for people with disabilities. who have a Disability Tax Credit Certificate, it may still come to us in the Bill C-17. On June 10th, 2020 the federal government introduced Bill C-17, *An Act respecting additional COVID-19 measures*, for it’s first reading. If passed in it’s current form, Bill C-17 would, among other things, make changes to the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

- I. <https://www.parl.ca/DocumentViewer/en/43-1/bill/C-17/first-reading>

Accessible Canada has published a virtual letter writing campaign in which people can write your own letter to your MP and share your story of why people with disabilities should receive financial aid from the Government of Canada.

- II. <https://www.include-me.ca/making-canada-accessible/action/pass-bill-c-17-now>

CSIL Policy Exceptions

- a. The ACE Executive sent a request to the Ministry of Health to extend the CSIL policy exceptions by 6 months;
 - I. Permit CSIL Employers to allocate surplus funding towards 2 weeks of pay for CSIL Employees who must self-isolate due to COVID-19
 - II. The use of an agency for emergency support without pre-approval
 - III. Hiring immediate family without pre-approval
 - IV. All expenses for universal precaution supplies to exceed the allotted \$40 per month
- b. UPDATE: On July 2nd, 2020, the Ministry of Health approved an extension of the policy amendments through December 31st, 2020, via an email received
 - I. Formal letter received from Teri Collins, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health Services Division
 - i. Letter is posted on the IFRC Website at <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>
 - II. The Ministry of Health stated that they have communicated this directive to all Health Authorities
 - III. CSIL Employers may receive notification from their respective Health Authorities advising of this update

CSIL Contract Clauses

- a. As discussed in the last meeting, we met with the VCHA and the Ministry to address two clauses we deemed unacceptable.
- b. It has come to our attention this is being floated by other Health Authorities for 2021
 - I. The ACE Executive is also concerned that the some of Health Authorities are sending out the announcements about the new contract.
 - i. **Interior Health statement:**
 1. In February 2020 the Ministry approved a new standardized contract developed by a CSIL Working Group in consultation with all five Health Authorities, the Association of CSIL Employers (ACE) and the Ministry of Health.
 2. ACE Executive was not part of the February 2020 consultation, and we will be addressing this with the Ministry and the Health Authorities
 - a. that they told CSIL Employers we were
 - b. that they did not include us in the consultation
 - ii. **Fraser Health Sample Contract:**
 1. A sample contract received by a CSIL Employer from Fraser Health includes the two clauses
- c. There will be a follow up meeting to discuss this with the Ministry and the Health Authorities
- d. At that time we initially met with them we were unaware those clauses are being announced by other Health Authorities.
 - I. **Terms under Review**
 - i. ***“23. Acting Reasonable and Approvals***
 - ii. *Where this agreement permits, allows or requires us to make a decision, provides us with an option to act or refrain from acting, approve or reject any request, submission or other item or any variation of those requirements, that decision, option or other action **will be undertaken at our sole discretion and will not require us to act reasonably....”***

- iii. ***“12.2 Your responsibilities during reviews, audits and investigations***
- iv. ***(c) upon request and at a mutually agreed time, arranging access to all sites at which the Services are delivered, Care Providers and other persons involved in the performance or administration of the Services”***

Miscellaneous Comments and Questions

- a. A request to organize more meeting time for CSIL updates
 - I. Paul Gauthier made a note to ensure more meeting time is available for CSIL updates
- b. Paul Gauthier stated that going forward, there will be one presentation per meeting
 - I. Better use of time for the 1st hour to be for a presentation and the 2nd hour for open conversation and discussion
- c. A reminder that the Stats Canada Survey “Impact of COVID” will close on July 6th, 2020
 - I. Please take a few minutes to complete the survey
 - II. <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/eng/covid19>
- d. Peers requested more meeting content that they can be actively engaged in with conversation about in-depth issues and the actions related to the CSIL program

Pathways To Independence Meetings Dates

- a. The next 3 meetings will be held the last Wednesday of the month
 - I. Zoom admittance beginning at 1:00pm
 - II. Meetings 1:30pm to 3:30pm
- b. Upcoming Meeting dates
 - a. July 29th, 2020
 - b. August 26th, 2020
 - c. September 30th, 2020

Pathways To Independence Peer Group Meeting Notes and pertinent documents are uploaded to <https://www.ifrcsociety.org/pathways>

This was a virtual Pathways To Independence Meeting via Zoom technology. In partnership with Technology for Living, whose Technical Team, headed by Ean Price, successfully ensured that peers could connect to the meeting from across the province.

Thank you everyone, for your attendance and contribution to the meeting!