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DEAF-BLIND IMMERSION EXPERIENCE

PRESENTER:

MICHAEL RICHARDS, HKNC

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>> ROBBIN: All right. Thank you for joining us. Excuse me. This is Robbin Bull with the National Center on deaf-blindness. And I'm showing it's the top of the hour. So I think I will get us started here. So I like to begin by welcoming everybody. And I'm going to go through some housekeeping items to get us started before I hand it over to Mike, who will be introducing today's speaker. To begin with, all phone lines have been muted to reduce background noise. The question-and-answer session will generally occur at the end of the session, however, you can type your questions in the chat pod as it will be monitored throughout the session, for the question-and-answer session.

This webinar will be recorded and archived and posted on our website for viewing after the fact. And the captioning transcript will be available after as well. All right. Mike, I believe we're ready to go you can take it from here.

>> MIKE: Good afternoon. My name is Mike Fagbemi and I'm the Transition Lead for NCDB and I'm happy to present a wonderful presentation by Michael Richards. He's been working in the field of Deaf-blindness for 27 years, and in particular, working with young adults and adults with additional disabilities. So I am really excited that we're able to have him come today and speak with us about what I consider to be an innovative program that serves young adults as well as adults, with additional disabilities. And I think that after hearing Michael talk about the program, you may be interested in finding out how you can get this program in your state. So I'm going to turn it over to Mike. And we'll be speaking soon.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Thank you, Michael. And I'm very excited to be here. Welcome, everybody to really just talk about the Deaf-blind immersion experience. And this is our first year with this program. And it's been --

>> ROBBIN: Excuse me. Michael. This is Robbin. Can you speak up a little bit?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Sure. Is that better?

>> ROBBIN: Much better. Thank you.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: I'm very happy to be here with you to talk about this motive active program that is in its first year and has had a lot of activity going on. So to

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start with, our program in order for it to really be successful we have to have a team. And that's the very first step when people ask how do I get started into the Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience for my family member or the person I'm working with. That would be the first step to put the team together and that will usually happen with the regional rep out in the field who may often make that identification and referral, as well as our own deaf-blind specialist.

And then the team builds from there. And you have the educational staff that are involved. Job developers. Job coaches. Home group staff. Whoever is pertinent in working with that individual will be part of a team. And then of course the team here. Which is myself, and staff Jessica, as well as some other departments that we do bring in for mobility, audiology, communication, all those areas in technology.

So once we have the team rolling, and this takes time to put all of this together. But our philosophy, one of the cornerstone philosophy here at Helen Keller is the person-centered planning and we use person-centered planning to put this assessment and training together. It's part of a whole discovery process. You know, not -- it's really creating a customize life for a person. And our young people in transition age, that will include employment, and it will also include everything that a person would want in their home, in their work, and in their community. That's really our mission.

And we really focus on providing functional skills as in the home, work, and the community. So those are all practical things we would be working on. The kind of training is all personalized, but a lot of our training is hands-on coaching for these teams, for the staff that are working, as well as family members. So part of the training will be as the individuals, as they have a job coach, for example, working with the participants at a work site, our team would be working alongside providing some tips regarding techniques, regarding communication. So it's right in the moment.

And then sometimes we'll have some separated trainings for the staff development. So when they're not with the individual that they're working with, maybe they have some time where we have a PowerPoint presentation such as this and we can have question-and-answer session and brainstorming where they're free to be involved with that without the individual they're working with.

And we're open to people of all ages. Of course we're zeroed in here on the NCDB with the transition age youth, but we've had students from transition age all the way up through seniors. And you'll see in the corner, as we're talking about the team, there is one of our recent participants who was here. There's a picture of him, myself, his mom, his teacher, and Jessica, our instructor. And we were all enjoying a meal out after a long day of training. And just to let you know, the training usually begins at 8:30 in the morning. And we keep it going until 7 o'clock at night. And it's all on our availability, but we follow the individual as to whether or not they need it or want that. So the leisure activities that we would offer would reinforce some of the skills we focused on during the day.

For example, using a communication card to go make a purchase out in the community. Or to make a choice between leisure activities, or to present at the restaurant. Planning out a small budget so you know how much money you have to spend on your evening activities. And, so, all of those reinforcing and the skills that we've worked on during the day.

And, so, as I've said before, discovery and personal [Lost audio] That we use, but we also follow the guidelines of Pre-ETS. Employment Transition Services where funds from the school can be accessed. So I'm just going to go through those various components of that. So the four areas. I'll mention it here and then we'll dive in. It's job exploration. Work-based learning. Workplace readiness training. And self-advocacy. These are the four maintain components.

Pre-Employment Transition Services. And there's a picture in the corner thereof one of our individuals who was here in June and is working with Jessica actually at a hotel [Audio fading in and out] Off the big machines, so that was something we did with him before he started his work which was folding laundry. Which wasn't quite as motivating. But just to be in that environment and to have the opportunity to explore those machines at the start of his work shift was enough to motivate him to continue working. That, of course, begins with personal future planning, and something that needs to start for our youth, it's starting right in high school. And for becoming a part of

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a participant in NCDB, it often takes months to get that together and get the whole process. So that's really important. And that involves the entire team.

So the home team is really exploring what's available in the community. You know, while we're all exploring what is it that the person wants? What is their preference? What is going to work for them? What are their skill sets they already have that we want to capitalize on? All of those things involved and getting that job, that exploration started. It could never be too early. Sometimes that could be have a vocational volunteer site to open up and expand where the person is already involved in the community. So a lot of individuals, they always frequent the same ice cream store. And they love that. Maybe there's something that they can do, making those connections at home.

And then we have the team meetings where we can kind of break that down and have those discussions about all of those things. And what are going to be the next steps? And as you're providing that information to us here and we're all brainstorming together about that, we then will sit down and based on that, what would be some viable options for that individual to participate in the community and integrated sites while they're here so that while they're actually engaged in those experiences here, we can provide on-site tips and techniques, and ascertain together what is working best for that person, you know, as a collaborative team. And figuring out all the nitty-gritty soft skills that are involved.

And we'll prepare a work schedule. Jessica and I will do that. We draft it up and send it out to the team to review and kind of give us some feedback. And then we have it all set from when the person is here.

>> MIKE: Michael, this is Mike. Just looking in the chat box, you said you will take some questions from the floor. Kathy from North Dakota asked, if the focus person, do they come here? Or do you go to them?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: That is a great question, Cathy. So we can do either. We can either travel to your, you know, the focus person's home area and work with the team there. Or we can have you all come here. We have done both. There are some

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criterion that we're discussing. And that would be things such as for the focus person and the team members, what are they perhaps medical or behavioral issues that they might pose a challenge for them to come here? And then we also might look at the entire scope of the team's resources. You know, whether that be financial, just the time constraints. We'll evaluate that. We did have an individual in Alaska, and it was going to be prohibitive for him to travel here based on his own physical health.

So we discuss that from the beginning. But those are both options. The other criterion would also be whether there are some vocational testing sites in the home area. Because we do have a lot of those already established here.

[break in connection for live in-room captioning]

>> ROBBIN They're just trying to get reconnected. Sorry about that. It look like they're reconnected. If you can go ahead, that would be fine. Sorry about that.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Everybody can hear me all right? Okay. If they're responsible for the medical needs of the person. And we had individuals from 2 to 6. And those , for example, we had a teacher who really wanted to come and she wasn't able to, so we'll have meetings that we will set up. So. Does that answer your question well, Cathy?

>> MIKE: While Cathy responds to that, looking in the chat box and Hillary had a question. Does student have to have legal status, green card, or Social Security number?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Hillary, that is a question we have not encountered that situation. And the Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience, just from my experience, from unlocking funding, yeah, they would need to have the green card and the Social Security card to make the funding happen. So talking about the base learning, now that we got our community integrated sites ready. What we'll do is, really, do a test analysis of the job duty that a person would be involved in. Because that will enable us to ascertain what are going to be their areas of strength and where they're going to need the support by breaking down the task. And there may be some parts of the task that are shared activities. Or they will need really full support of the staff. And then there

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will be others where they can be independent and somewhere along the line.

Somewhere along the spectrum. And, of course, we're always providing the instructions and the individual's preferred communication mode. That's a given.

And then breaking down the task, for a lot of our guides, that's really the key to really making it happen. For example, we had someone recently at Barnes and Noble. And they were shelving books. And they were able to do some of the alphabetizing, but in order to make that happen, more accessibly for them, they needed like an alphabet card. They just had to look down and see A through Z and which came first and they were able to break it down. Sometimes they need support, and it was minimal prompting and support for that. But just having the knowing and what pieces of the task and knowing what the supports are is really what makes it happen. You know, on the job. Where to insert natural supports in that particular case, in the manager, they were so welcoming and they didn't realize we were going to be there that day for two days, and giving instructions about the locker and where to put things, and that was really excellent. And he would have a regular person he would be communicating with. So we put together some communication cards.

So tuning into those soft skills, like, okay, when can I take a break? Where can I put my things? Where do I need assistance with that? And, so, tuning into all those sorts of things all involved in the work-based learning. So the workplace readiness training. With this, of course we're talking about independent living skills, grooming, time, meals. That is a mandatory area. You're not going to be able to go to work if you're not going to get up on time. If you're not going to pack your lunch or you know, appear in an acceptable grooming.

A lot of those things can be areas that really need support. There's a story of a consumer who had some great work skills. And a young transition age person needed some support and grooming. And in meeting with her and a family, it seemed to me she would -- should would be able to do, you know, carry out her grooming routine independently. And her mom indicated the reason she wasn't was because there was a prompt dependency and it was a routine the family settled into. And that's natural and it

happens. But what we decided upon was to set up grooming cards. And she used some basic Braille.

And she mapped out the steps of the routine. Put your pajama in the laundry basket. Brush your teeth. Take a bath. And she set up the cards on her bedroom door. And she would move the card when it was finished, she would move it to the finished column that was set up on a Velcro. And she was able to follow that very quickly. In fact, like a week after she had emailed me that she was so excited about using those, and herself confidence had really built, and the mom subtracted herself out of that task some of that was a great step in confidence building, which can then lead you to other skills.

And I mentioned the communication skills of course. And using communication cards to have those interactions at work with people who may not follow your communication mode. They may not be signer. Or things that you're going to encounter in every day life in the community. And using those for travel. That's another issue that came up. Technology is another mode that our individuals are using, whether it would be to map out or sequence a work task. Or just to have the communication. So one of the folks are using choice work, choice work application. And that was great for sequencing out tasks. And that would be something like you can review with the person at the start of the task.

And then, move the step of the task. Say, it was, you know, stack, you know, all of these books in the category A through C on the task? And then would you do that and then when they were finished with that, they would move and go to the next step. So it was a way to give that person more independence in following their set up.

So, another one of the communication cards was buzz cards. A lot of individuals, you know, for those who use transaction in the community. We would use some of those things and pull in, depending on the need of the person, we would pull in the tech instructor to review some of those items.

And, of course, mobility. As I was saying, travel and safe navigation. So people might access that differently, depending on where they're from. And, so, in our pre-

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intake work, we try to get a scope of what is the community like? Whether it's rural, suburban, or would they use paratransit or cab or bus? What's going to be their mode? So then we're able to manage that here and provide the necessary instruction pinpointing what they need. And you'll see in the corner, there's a picture of a young lady, that was her first time ever using a cab. And we had communication cards set up for her. She also used some voice. But was able to make the transaction. She was very excited about that. And she was able to practice getting to work while she was here. A skill she will be able to transfer when she gets home. That was a big step for her.

>> MIKE: This is Mike. I was looking at the chat box. And I have two questions. Both questions from Cathy from North Dakota. She wanted to know how long the immersion experience takes. And the second question, what is a buzz card?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Our experience with Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience is 5 days of training. I wish it could be longer. Maybe that will happen in the future. For when we hold it here, we do it for 5 days. We had a few that have been out in people's home state. And those have so far been either 4 or 5 days, depending on the whole situation with each person. So, but it could -- maybe some people need 2 or 3 days. Or if they needed more, we would certainly avail ourselves for less or more. Whatever would be the need. And buzz cards are cards, it's an app, I believe, that you can find online. And it's like pre-made cards you can set up. So for like your Starbucks order, I want mocha with hot cream. And please tap my hand when it's ready because I'm deaf-blind. So those are those types of cards that would be.

So the other component of Pre-ETS would be self-advocacy, which is so important and we sort of touched on it as we've gone along. And for our individuals who are deaf-blind with additional disability, it's something that they would need, the team support. To be able to interpret some of the ways they're delivering their advocacy. Because the person, the participant will always have some means of expressing how they want things to go in their life. And then it's up to us as a team to determine what do they mean? And they all have their own unique mode.

So some of the methods for individuals who need a little bit extra support with that, I always have a team that would sit down, and we kind of really highlight all of their strengths. That's really important. And then communicating expectations. For me, having expectations is always going to yield results. And not having expectations I think tends to keep people in a prompt dependency kind of mode and doesn't move them forward. So, really, thinking about our person just as we would ourselves or anyone that we have expectations.

And encouraging independence, just going back to the young lady with her grooming routine with the cards. You know, and once she had those, and her self-confidence was so uplifted. And that's part of advocacy. And this can help people move forward with their independence and help them get on with the next step. And providing positive reinforcement and that can happen in so many ways for each person. For some, it may be vocationally immediately related that they're getting paid. I remember one of our first individuals who did get a job, and his first paycheck, he emailed out a copy of it to the team. And he talked about things that he was going to buy.

Another one of our young folks was talking about, he was so motivated to get a job that he was listing out the things he wanted to buy and what he was going to save for. So recommending money thermometer that's visual or tactile. If they need \$50, they can have that written there and when it's going up and when they're going to reach their goals.

So some people for their positive reinforcement, it might be the verbal praise they're going to receive. So there's a lot of individual ways. And it's all about knowing the person that you're working with and having that rapport that can build towards a self-advocacy.

>> MIKE: This is Mike. From Ann -- We have more than one transitional age deaf-blind students that could benefit from this. Does it help to schedule several sessions back-to-back? So the trip to our state is time that's efficiently used? I'm thinking of students who may do better transferring skills in their own community.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: That's a great question, Ann, and the way you explain it, it really does make sense. We have not actually had that experience with someone, but we have been discussing it in another state where that could happen. So that if we're coming to your community, and it would make sense if you had two or three, you know, together that we could spend those three weeks with you or whatever the time allotment was making sense for your team. That would make a much more efficient use of resources and we could surely plot that out.

And for a lot of individuals, we are recognizing that -- we'll go through that criterion. What is going to make sense, whether the team to travel here or we should go there. But especially, when it's long-distances, that can be prohibitive. But also the ability to transfer and generalize some of the skills is not as efficient as if we already go to your area.

So, yes, that is something that we can definitely plot out.

So, those are some of -- those are the components of the pre-Employment Transition Services. That was just a little bit of an overview of that. And just for the application of DBIE, when we have action planning throughout the week, we'll have some time period where we'll sit down and have some debriefing. And usually, we'll have one or two team meetings in that week where the whole team will get together, including those at home who weren't able to join. And then we'll really, at the end of the week, map out an action plan.

And we'll then take that action plan, Jessica and I, and we'll put it into a report that will summarize the training that happened. It will include recommendations and next steps. So that you'll be able to use that.

What we also will do is we also put together a video. The video is usually capturing the highlights of the experiences while the person was here. It captures them in their work experiences and some community activities. Captures them like using a communication card with an on-site public. Some independent living skills. We'll get the highlights that are pertinent and essential for each person.

And then we will have a good script that we'll put in there. So it's been a useful teaching tool that people -- because what happens a lot of time for individuals who may be either living in community residences, or maybe attending a day program, or just even if they have job coaching staff for their jobs, as we know, a usual problem is that you have change over of staff. That happens often. Sometimes you become fortunate and have the staff that stays around for a few years. But it's always going to be an issue that that staff will change. So having that video of the best practices of how to work with that person, some of the tips for communication, for mobility, interacting with the person in the best way will be incorporated into the videotape. And the administration and the supervisors will be able to give that to their team to use.

So we've had feedback that that has been a very helpful tool. So that's another application of our DBIE.

We also have our community of practice. And so far, we have been meeting quarterly, and we open that up to all the individuals and their teams who have completed the DBIE training. And the way it's happened thus far as it's evolving is, we share resources. We give updates. We then have started to, I've brought up what topics would the teams like to talk about? And one that has come up recently, which I'm planning for our next one in December is grieving.

Because we had a few individuals who have lost one or both of their parents, and just were not included in the best way in the process and have never had the ability to grieve in the best -- in the way that we would all want to.

So, bringing in an expert social worker who has expertise that in area to sort of help people with. And unfortunately, that's something that everyone is going to face, but just to have some preparation. And everyone has unique situations as per their family, as per their culture, and religion, and just something that everyone will experience and how do we help our individuals with that?

And then opening it up to whatever other topics that people want to talk about. We've spent a bit of time really talking about staffing, and how to obtain staff, and how to maintain them and provide training. And those are an overall challenging area for

many people. So that's been a hot topic that we talked about. But that is also in those quarterly meeting have come up, you know, I need more assistance. It came from the DBIE, but, for example, someone came couple of years ago, their whole team changed. You know, people have left. Nothing is the same. And now we're having all kinds of challenges.

And, so, I want to regroup. And, so, out of that came recently, I'm going next month to a team. And I'm going to help support them there. Because the whole team changed. And there was a lot of break downs some of right now, we're just mapping out kind of what other learning goals, and how are we going to maintain those and that process? And so that's another benefit of the community of practice.

>> MIKE: Just looking in the chat box again. And we've got a question from Cathy from North Dakota. What is your sense of the post past DBIE job placements work for students from rural communities?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: That is a good question, Cathy. Haven't had a lot of individuals from necessarily rural communities. But what I can say from my experience is over the years that it's going to be advantageous and essential to really have the team working on that in advance. Trying to figure out, you know, what all of the components of that would be. Such as transportation, finding the right staff, things that might come up specific to the rural area. We've had a few individuals who have been placed in jobs. Others are still in school who are working towards that, and the team is continuing to take what they learned here and continuing the work experiences, and getting them ready before they graduate.

And then we've had a few older students who's work wasn't necessarily their goal. They have programs. They gained a great deal from their increased communication and decrease in behavior, and the team's ability to communicate better with them. And some have received other streams of funding. The majority have come from VR or commissions from the blind. Sometimes the funding has been shared with the Agencies in each state. We've had couple of regional grants that have happened for people. So, there are other, you know, few separate streams of funding. I hope that was a helpful answer to you.

In addition, as I've said, out of the community practice, there have been follow-ups. Sometimes the follow-ups, we always extend ourselves as best as our time will allow to individuals who have completed the program for calls, for emails, sometimes follow-up visits come out of it. If a person is local, we try to make that happen for them.

We will -- we were in discussion recently, and we'll be setting up probably a 90-day general follow-up that we will do. We haven't set that as yet, and they just sort of arisen, but maybe we'll make it formal that we'll check back in 90 days and see if they have the goals we set forth in the recommendations and action plans, have those come to fruition. And if not, what is the missing piece? And how do we remediate that?

>> MIKE: Michael, looking at the chat box, and Cathy has a follow-up comment. She was thinking that job tonight's in rural settings may be different.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: And, yes, Cathy. It would be. One piece that has come up in my past experience has always been transportation. Transportation has been challenging with that. One thing I do want to mention is that some of our individuals, we have community residents here where we have 5 individuals who live, who are deaf-blind with additional disabilities. And couple of the young ladies that are there, they own their own manual vending machines.

And it's a very small part-time type of business that they have, which they are responsible for the shopping, for the stocking of the machines, for handling the money, and restocking of the money. And they purchase the machine on their own. And some of them have received assistance from Social Security to get those machines.

And I think they're like \$600 or \$700. And there's a small business plan attached to that. And they set them up. We have them here. Sometimes other people may have set them up in their state counselor's office. And we provide suggestions. But it is something that couple of people who have gone through the experience have really been very interested in it and have matched. We always offer it. Sometimes they've done it as a shared activity with another peer.

So it opens up a possibility for a launching pad for individuals. That is not the only thing our individuals here in our community residence do. They have that

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business. And they also have a part-time job they do several hours a week that they get paid for. So we don't want to limit it, but sometime it can be a challenge to get the ball rolling in the vocational, so that can be kind of a springboard to get people started. And then they make connections in the community. Somebody was going to set it up in a car wash and maybe that leads to another job.

So just information.

>> MIKE: Mike, this is Mike. I'm looking in the chat box again. Ann from Minnesota, you mentioned funding. What's the cost for DBIE?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Thank you, Ann. Great question. The cost for training is \$500 per day. And then the cost of course the travel for the individuals that are either coming here or we're going there. I have mapped out the cost in both ways, whether a team is traveling to the individual's home area or whether the team is coming here.

And it's pretty close. There's not a large disparity between the two. Depending upon how many people are traveling.

Just to let you know also, there's no additional charges for the team training. The training is happening simultaneously for the focus person as well as the team members. So we don't charge anything extra for the team.

The individuals who do come here is the charge for room and board, which is \$50 a day. And that matches your actual setting in the dorm. [Chuckles] But, that's the only other charge. \$50 a day for the person for room and board. And, of course, your travel.

>> MIKE: So Cathy has a question. So if you travel to a state, how many people do you end up bringing with you?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Great question, Cathy. As I've said before, we require that two individuals come. So, if I'm coming to you, I see. So if I'm coming to you. Usually, so far, it's been myself and my staff Jessica. The two of us who have come. You're welcome.

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Are there any other questions? I just want to mention there's a picture you see in this last slide here of one of our individuals who went through the program. That was a schedule board we posted on the wall. In fact, that young man did have tactile finding. And he had a vocabulary of couple hundred words, more than what his staff did. And, so, we worked with that team of staff for time extended beyond the five days with him. Because they needed a lot of training. Especially, in communication.

We also, you'll see there's tactile object symbols on there. So we set those up according to his schedule and things that he was doing. And then provided training and the signs for corresponding signs for those. And we actually did a video of the hundred of signs for the individuals. Some of them more of his home modification of sign. But the reason why that training was extended was, one, it was local and in our area. And the Agency, which was D.C., actually funded their own training funds and identified several other individuals who were also deaf-blind that they had not been attending to their deaf-blindness.

>> MIKE: Mike, this is Mike. Chat box. Kim from Ohio recently learned that opportunities for Ohioan with disabilities has contracted with HKNC to be a vendors to work with individuals. I'm interested in the opportunity, maybe that's something you can call me about or we can email?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Yes, Kim, I am aware of the opportunities for Ohioans with disabilities. And we can definitely talk more about that. And if there's any other individuals from Ohio, we can do that. And I'm going to have my email contact up on the screen so you'll be able to contact me.

>> MIKE: So this is Mike. We've got about 12 or so minutes left. And I would really like, there's lots of good questions popping up in the chat. But you're also free to ask questions if we can put the phones, take you off mute. Press # 6 and you can ask questions that way as well. Keep the questions coming in both ways, either calling in or typing into the chat box. We welcome them all.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: So, I just wanted to give you this final. I do some acronyms here and there. And this was an acronym about T.E.A.M. This is what I have.

T, tackling trials together.

E, everyone's efforts energizes.

A, acknowledges another's assets.

M, measuring minute milestones.

This was made up a long time ago but this is great for teams. Everyone's milestones are unique and sometimes may feel different. Or other people might view it as slow. But it's unique and it's important to measure those and reflect on those that makes everything cohesive. And we call our conference bike and riding on our track here at Helen Keller, and you'll see the focus person, his mom, his teacher, myself, and recreational specialist wheeling around outside on the tracks. So it's a nice visual of a team. And I believe my email has been posted in the chat box. It is Michael.Richards@HKNC.org. Not Mike. It's spelled out Michael. Okay.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Judy has a question and maybe Mike, you can wrap-up into -- you can answer the question about the DBIE team and Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience and also talk about role of the regional rep?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Umm-hmm. Okay. So, yes, so the regional rep is, you know, supervising the Deaf-blind specialist. And, really, the regional rep is a person that usually gets things started. You know, that's that initial identification and referral. And then as I understand it, then the Deaf-blind specialist will coordinate with us as a team and we'll kind of be the boots on the ground for once those work sites are identified. You know, and really providing the support that would be right there.

So it would be greatly advantageous if deaf-blind reps are able to join the Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience, you know, for however their schedule can be worked out to be part of that so they can just have the experiential learning. And then be able to take that. It will be advantageous and make them more efficient and helping the transition from back home to just have a piece of the actual experience. That is a welcome invitation to all the regional reps and deaf-blind specialists. Does that make sense?

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>> MIKE: This is Mike. So follow-up question from earlier, you had mentioned earlier about funding. Do you want to mention the funding sources that you've learned? Have really worked out for the young adults or the older adults?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: So as I've said, we've had funding from VR counselors. Underneath that it could be the Commission for the Blind. We have also had that funding shared with DD. Which whatever the DD service is in that state. And we have also had couple of people who have obtained regional grants. We have additionally had deaf-blind projects that have helped out with things such as travel or just supporting the team members to come.

They have not paid for the training, but for the team members to arrive and all of those needs of them.

Those were the main sources that we have experienced at this time. Umm-hmm.

>> CATHY: Mike, can you hear me?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Yes.

>> CATHY: I just wondered when the team has multiple funding sources paying for the service, do you end up invoicing each funding service or do you just coordinate through one entity and they pull together the money behind-the-scenes?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: I believe what's happened thus far, and in few of those cases, it's separate. Separate invoices for those.

>> CATHY: Oh, good. Thanks.

>> MIKE: This is Mike. Just looking in the chat box. Marilyn has a question. She wants you to explain who pays for the team when they come to the state? So when you're traveling to the state, where does the funding source come from?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: The funding source is the same. It's not any different. The cost of the training is the same, the \$500 a day. And then they have to pay for our travel needs and lodging needs to be paid. So it's happened via regional grants. It

would need to happen via the same sources of funding as when people are coming here.

>> MIKE: Looking through the chat box for more questions. So, Mike, this is Mike. If a project had an interest in the program, who do they contact first? Who would be the first point of contact? Is it you? The rep? DD specialist? How would you recommend they proceed?

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: I think just, if you wanted more information about DBIE and clarification and things like that, they can contact me. I think it's best that they do contact the regional rep if it's a referral, okay, we have this person. It's best they start with the regional rep who will then begin the coordination and will contact me and we'll start a team.

>> MIKE: Okay. Looking into the chat box. And while people are thinking maybe about their next question, I want to thank you Mike for presenting. And last week, we had a great opportunity. Linda and Ellen flew in from their states and we had an opportunity to work with HKNC, because there's a bigger plan here. Although we talk about young adults, adults with additional disabilities, there's a great appetite in the network to support these adults, young adults who leave the school and they don't have a whole a lot of prospects or opportunities.

So this is a really good opportunity for us to be thinking about jobs for the people but also 50,000 foot-view looking at the system and how we can support the families, deaf-blind projects and the adult service system around finding opportunities for deaf-blind youth to be working in an integrated competitive setting. Or work is not something they have identified as something they would like to do, it would be about really improving the equality of their life as well.

So I do appreciate that you have come to talk to us about the program, and I want to say, too, those that are on the call, we do look forward to you participating in our -- we've got a few thing happening in terms around our community. And we're going to be looking at the recommendations which fits very nicely into some of what Michael was sharing today.

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Whole idea here is to really change the outcomes for those young adults, in this particular case, those young adults who have little prospects for anything else when they graduate from school.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: And I see Marilyn's question. When someone is applying, how long does it take for them to be scheduled to attend at the center for this great program? Timeframe. Great question, Marilyn. And the fastest that has ever happened has been a month. But it usually takes a few months to get that together. I feel it will get faster as Deaf-Blind Immersion Experience gets out into the forefront and more people and more VR counselors, and more DD programs understand the value of it, the funding will get to be much swifter. So.

>> MIKE: Okay. So, I think we're at the top of the hour. And there's some questions still popping into the chat box. And I'll stay on and I'll continue to look at these questions and see if we can get some follow-up answers. But thank you, all, for participating in this webinar today. I hope that you found it useful.

>> MICHAEL RICHARDS: Thank you, everyone.

[End of webinar]