



Community of Support for Return to Work Life

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United States Department of Agriculture
National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Mission: To help Maine farmers, fishermen and forest workers overcome disabilities, injuries or other barriers so they can continue to work safely and productively.



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- Alpha One is Maine's Center for Independent Living
 - Directed by and for people with disabilities
 - Statewide with offices in S. Portland, Bangor and Presque Isle
 - To create opportunities for people with disabilities to live independently

Information and Referral line 800-760-7200 or
www.alphaonenow.org

Alpha One -
Who we are

What is a Center for Independent Living?

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential private non-profit agency that is designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provides an array of independent living services.

Our CIL provides:

Information & Referral

Personal Assistant Services Programs

Independent Living Services Grant Program

Adapted Equipment Loan Program

Adapted Driving Evaluation

Advocacy

Independent Living Services

Critical Access Ramp Program

Access Design Services

[Maine AgrAbility](#)



[Google "Center for Independent Living"](#) to find the CIL(s) in your state.

Learning Objectives

Planting

“Planting seeds” for a return-to-work role.

Assisting/ teaching

Assisting/teaching the consumer to find their voice and developing new skills in interacting with their family, friends and community.

Assisting

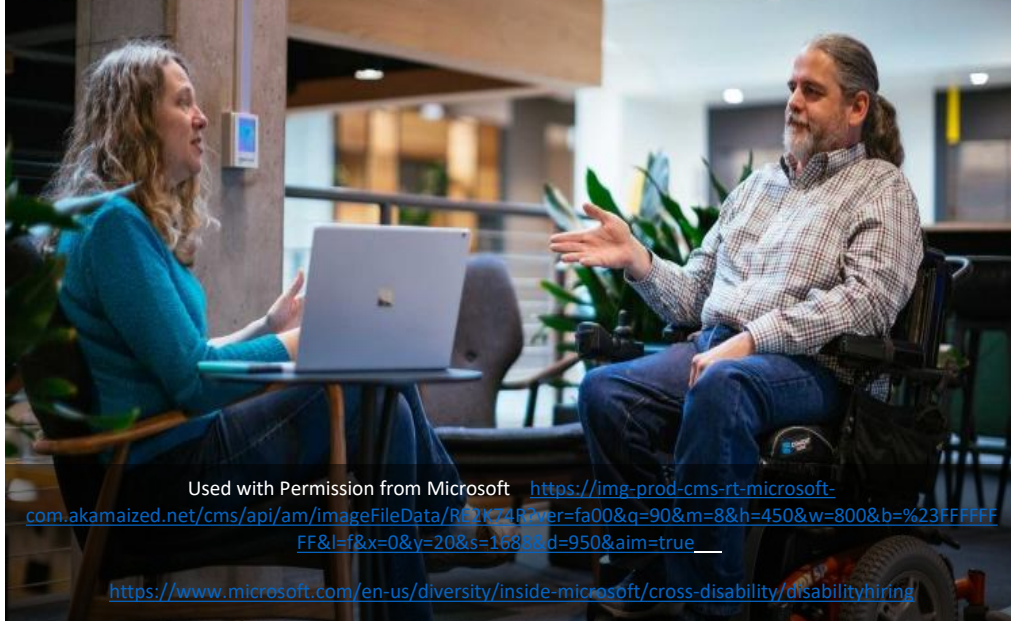
Assisting the consumer in developing their community of support.

Assisting

Assisting the consumer to find their balance in their work role.

Point of change in one's life

- What is the change? – any event that causes a person to re identify themselves - injury, illness, medical event
 - Spinal cord injury
 - Stroke
 - Amputation
 - PTSD
 - Or any other event



First meeting – “Planting seeds”

- As an AgrAbility Specialist this may be
 - Seeing someone in the hospital
 - First home from the hospital
 - Health or disability related event
 - Connecting with the individual’s family or friends

Question: As an AgrAbility Specialist where do you outreach to get potential clients?

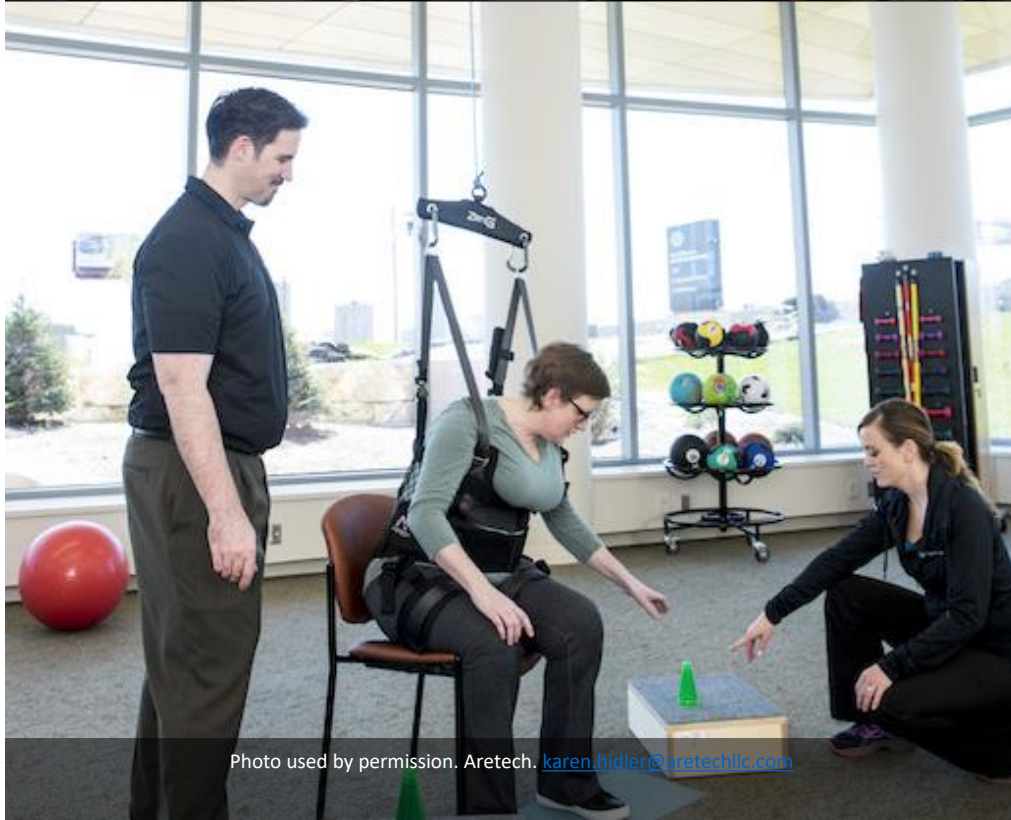


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- Self identity

Sometimes initial response to disability

“I am not the person I used to be”

“Disabled”

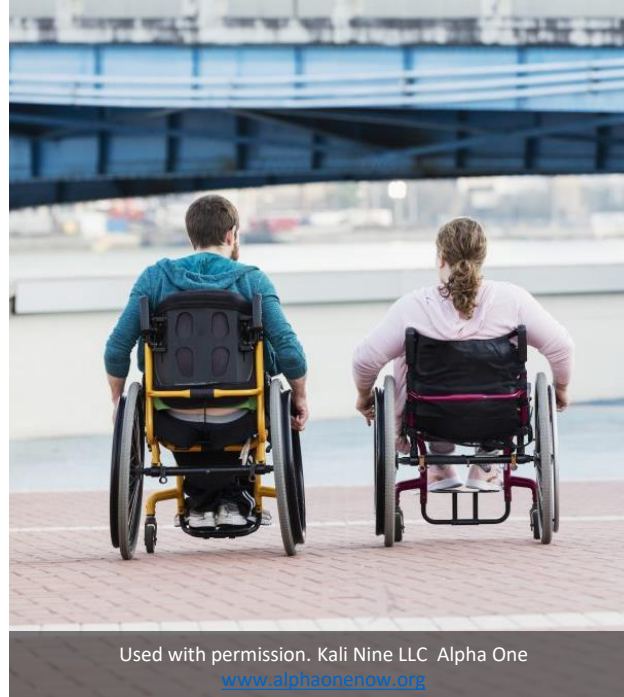
- Self identifiers before injury or illness or medical event
 - mom, skier, hunter, logger, coach

Individuals cannot initially identify with their previous role

How does someone reclaim these identities beyond the disability?

As AgrAbility Specialists we believe that they can reclaim their identity and we can teach them how.

First meeting
– “Planting
seeds”

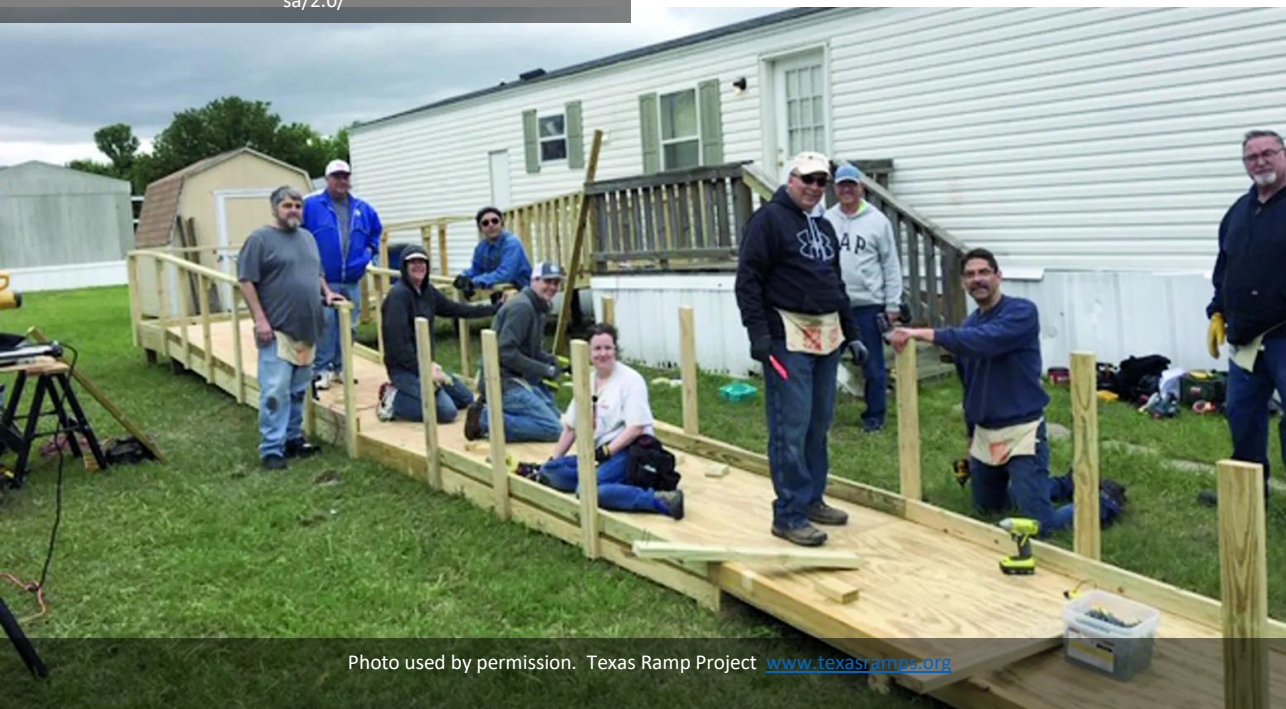


On the road to recovery to your new life

- Setting goals about who you want to be again
 - These goals are running parallel to therapy goals in rehab
- Identifying barriers at home and work
- Recommending resources to help
- Peer support
- Community support

Setting the stage for believing and knowing there are opportunities from day one.

If we believe as AgrAbility Specialists about recovery, then the consumer will begin to believe.



Discharge to home

- Starting to claim identity
 - needs to start as soon as possible
- Prepare for possible setbacks
 - clearer reality
 - barriers are immediate
 - start to implement what learned in rehab
 - recognizing they and the whole family are grieving

Question: How does disability affect others in the family?

Home environment – what are the barriers that keep the person from getting out of their home to get out to work or community?

1. Physical environment – identify home access needs and provide resources to create independence
2. Personal care – at home, and then in work/community
 - diet and nutrition
 - building sitting tolerance (check skin)
 - know how different surfaces will affect your body (weight bear/pressure points).
 - learn about new body and what works
 - keep things in check (prolong recovery or cause a new injury).
 - hydration.
 - cause and effect.
 - how body and environment temperature affects function.
 - bowel/bladder – adhere to schedule, develop a program.

These allow one to plan one's day, go to work, go out in community.

Discharge to
Home –
looking at
barriers

Reaching out

-Reaching out to your community to develop support is very difficult because of

- culture
- not wanting or knowing how to ask for help
- embarrassed
- your community may be just as scared of you as you are of them

“By not reaching out this can increase isolation and a barrier in itself.”

Individual needs to build their ability to reach out to the community to get back to life

- Teach others what you need
- The community may be the solution to some of the barriers - the answer might already be out there
- Be open to solutions - informal resources, Do-It-Yourself, off-the-shelf, AT products that might be available within the community

Reaching out

Consumer personality

- become more comfortable with asking
- become more assertive
- not being embarrassed
- being able to speak up more for yourself
- flexible that others who offer help are not perfect and may not understand or do it exactly the way you want
- be able to educate, explain how something needs to be done

Who to reach out

- friends and neighbors
- family
- strangers
- finding agencies, organizations, businesses that can help in various ways

Question: As the AgrAbility Specialist, what type of resources do you typically offer?

Re-Identifying

Processing limitations - avoid getting stuck

- everyone does this, but after disability, limitations can be used as excuses or making self barriers.
- If limitations are not processed, the disability defines the person versus other skills and talents. Can lead to learned dependency.
- These can also be imposed by others – medical model as to lack of knowledge about independence options in the community, assistive technology, awareness of those who are, “Doing it.”
- Avoid – “I’m disabled, so I can’t _____.”

Process of re-identifying is to consider all the skills, qualities, and abilities. Disability is only an aspect of who they are.

Trying on roles

Previous roles, new roles – take the first dip

- parent role, favorite activities

Getting started – what will you need to be successful

- Modified role – what part(s) of the job are you going to do and how?

How - assistive technology, personal assistance

- Start with fewer hours – build endurance. It can take more energy to do the same tasks as before.

- Pay attention to precautions – something gets hot, weight bearing too long, too much environmental stimulation

- Stay in balance, be intentional about tasks, will need to make choices as to activities and how long involved due to endurance. Coordinating routines with others (personal care, extra hand they need on the farm). Choosing what to participate in around personal care routines.

- It is a learning process about oneself and others
- Learning about the bodies' tolerance and needs for activities
 - Sitting, standing tolerance and how functional
 - Body functions – bowel, bladder, fluid intake
 - Body temperature – not too hot, not too cold
 - Repositioning (for pain management, or skin)
 - Is the equipment adjusted for you and the job?
Consequences if it is not right?
 - Can you sit for 3-12 hours? Can you reposition? Use a timer to remember to change position.
 - Provide the right support, angle, height, view
 - Is the equipment functional for the work you want to do?

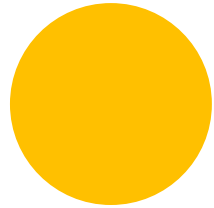
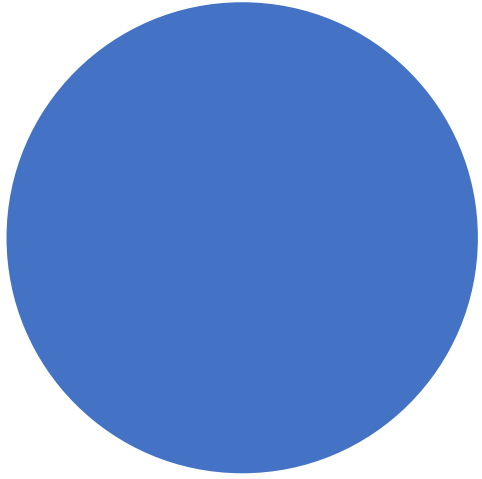


Trying on
roles

Back to Work

- Ongoing process
 - Staying in balance with self
 - New medical issue, may need to readjust and go through this process again
 - Know that grieving is an ongoing process
 - Continue to reach out to one's community
 - Work at ability to speak up
 - Continue to find new helpers in your community of support





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Questions? Comments?
Other thoughts?



Thank you

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