

Cade Hebert (00:00)

All right, welcome back to more like than you think. ~ today we're joined with a very special guest, ~ Jennifer is it pronounced Oak's last name?

Jenn Ochs (00:09)

Yeah, good job.

Cade Hebert (00:10)

Okay. Yeah, I wasn't sure. ~ so yeah, she's joining us today and we're gonna talk all about independent living. ~ so Jennifer, do you think you could just introduce yourself and share a little bit about your journey as far as it goes with independent living and ~ everything like that?

Jenn Ochs (00:29)

Yeah, sure I'm Jen Ochs ~ I moved out of a nursing home twenty eighteen to community living because of ~ my ~ social worker at the

nursing home no it realize I could be living independent. So there's didn't option counselor who helps you decide if you wanna live independently. And then they connect you to like an agency like Centre for People with Disabilities. And they found my apartment for me.

made sure I got a a voucher to pay for a meal. So really they moved me and set my whole apartment up. They really like moved me in to a ready made apartment. Like lovely human-ified things like shampoo, toothpaste, you know. But

The last place what they think you need when starting it. So yeah.

Cade Hebert (01:39)

Okay, gotcha.

Jenn Ochs (01:41)

And ~ I've now been living independently still short like what is that like eight years.

And I live in a different complex now but I'm very independent. I live in Boulder I can get around with the transit system because I don't drive. And I think for people who want to learn about this, definitely can involve with center for independent living.

Which there's one usually in like I think there's nine in our state. So yeah, they help you navigate and they as a youth they often have youth programs and have transition programs that will help you along know what you need to know for moving in independently.

Cade Hebert (02:42)

Okay. Gotcha. So would you say like a good first step with people or like young adults with disabilities to get into independent living, ~ would you say a good first step is getting in contact with a center for independent living?

Jenn Ochs (02:57)

Absolutely. I think, you know, they they know all the programs available and ~ it is harder when when you're in a nursing home it's easier to transition to community living because they are wanting to ~ promote people living outside of school nursing facilities.

Cade Hebert (02:59)

Okay.

Jenn Ochs (03:24)

But if you live with family, it's much harder. Again there I would go to the center of independent living to find out what way to navigate it.

Cade Hebert (03:37)

Gotcha. I'm curious with your s living situation now, ~ how did you go about finding a place that had accommodations for your needs specifically?

Jenn Ochs (03:48)

Well actually I got involved with Boulder housing partners and they found they had to move me 'cause mm the first complex was gonna be like not livable. So they had to find ~ and they found an ADA 'cause I'm a wheelchair user, an ADA unit and made sure I could get around and I can

Everything was functional.

Quinna Phillips (04:18)

I would love to interject and ask a question real quick. ~ so for our young people out there that might already be somewhat living independently but aren't either don't have the most accessible place or just don't love the city they live in or something like that, ~ is this something you can do multiple times, like even if you have already been kind of set up in a place and you just it's not working for you, can you reach back out to that center and they'll help you find a different place?

Jenn Ochs (04:40)

You can try, but it's tricky when waivers are involved, which usually is what most people need, because a waiver gives you a better reduced rate for rent. And you can some waivers stay with a person, some stay with the unit. So if you have a waiver that says with your person,

Quinna Phillips (05:03)
Gotcha ok

Jenn Ochs (05:07)
Yeah, you can find a different place. It's harder to find ADA apartments. That's always a challenge. But ~ if you as long as your waiver allows you to move, then you're good. You can find different places again with the center of independent living.

Quinna Phillips (05:16)
Yeah.

That's good to know, thank you.

Cade Hebert (05:29)
Yeah. And so ~ some of our youth advisory community members ~ expressed like questions that they had about finances and things like that. And so what advice would you give about managing money and ~ income and benefits and kind of the financial responsibilities that come with independent living?

Jenn Ochs (05:51)
Well, usually if you have SI or SSDI, you get a monthly payment. Usually the third of month, which check with the landlord or let know like a time trying to do the first time month, but they can often make accommodations, no problem, as long as they're aware. And as far as like

I always suggest making sure you pay your rents and any utilities and anything you know then be coming out a month before you have money to play with. And you you don't have a lot of money 'cause as SSDI is notoriously low but ~ it's possible to

Cade Hebert (06:34)
Okay, yeah.

Jenn Ochs (06:45)
live monthly, I mean it's really learning to live on two grand a month. A little less maybe, but ~ that's what Medicaid requires you to that's your limits. You can't go over two grand or they boot you off of Medicaid which is scary cause you don't wanna

You know, have to happen. But yeah, ch you always prepare your your necessities before you work.

Cade Hebert (07:14)
Mm-hmm.

Okay. Right.

Quinna Phillips (07:22)

Yeah. And for any any listeners out there that aren't familiar with kind of disability law and how that all works, what what Jen was referencing was that there are limits to not only how much money you can have in a bank account, but your assets as well. ~ you know, things like a car or a really fancy camera or something could also be included in that. So ~ yeah, a lot of the advice, financial advice is around saving and budgeting, and that's not exactly as applicable all the time to people on disability because we do have those limits.

Cade Hebert (07:40)

Yeah, yeah.

Yeah.

Jenn Ochs (07:49)

Yeah,

that's tricky, but once you get it down, you steam you will have the same payments due every month, so you kinda learn what you can and can't do with your money.

Cade Hebert (08:06)

Right.

Yeah, so I'm curious to hear now, ~ thinking about your i journey and independent living and everything, whenever you would start to feel overwhelmed by any of it, what helped you be able to navigate that? And what were the things that were overwhelming?

Jenn Ochs (08:24)

Well, when I moved into my ~ community apartment, I had a year of a transition coordinator that was given to me from the Center of Independent Living. So they would be my go-to if I had concerns or fire stress or whatever. Of your past year.

Cade Hebert (08:35)

Okay.

Jenn Ochs (08:49)

Again I wish I go to your centre for independent living, they'll know where to guide you.

Cade Hebert (08:55)

Okay. Gotcha.

And let's see, so what's something that you would give to youth or young adults with disabilities who feel nervous about their their future or their ability to live independently and feel like nervous or afraid or just can't picture it in their mind, ~ what advice would you

give?

Jenn Ochs (09:14)

Yeah.

Just do it. It is possible and don't let it hold you back. One thing I learned, you know, and I'm eight years in is that I can work little part time job without you know messing up my benefits. And I wish I'd known that sooner 'cause I would have done it earlier.

Cade Hebert (09:20)

Yeah.

Yeah.

Okay, right.

Jenn Ochs (09:40)

Yeah.

Cade Hebert (09:40)

Yeah. Gotcha. And I'm wondering what ~ Quinno, were you talking?

Quinna Phillips (09:45)

realized I was muted halfway through so I stopped. No, I was just saying I love that advice. I feel like that's my favorite piece of advice for almost any question. Like you'll figure it out. You got this. It'll it'll work out one way or another.

Cade Hebert (09:46)

go for it.

Jenn Ochs (09:46)

Mm.

Cade Hebert (09:56)

Yeah. Just start

Jenn Ochs (09:56)

Yeah.

Cade Hebert (09:58)

and then everything will come together eventually.

Jenn Ochs (09:59)

Yeah.

Directly.

Quinna Phillips (10:02)

And it's it's

you know, I think a lot of times we get these kind of chasms between like, well, as a disabled person, and it's like independent living is scary for all of us, you know, like we don't none of us have ever done this before until we've done it. So I think that's you know, ever it'll it'll you'll be okay. You'll figure it out. I know that's a little Pollyanna, but I love it.

Cade Hebert (10:11)
Yeah.

Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Jenn Ochs (10:17)
Yeah.

Yeah, mean I... I mean no lie, I was nervous. I'm like if this doesn't work, I'll have to go back to nursing home. I you know, I think it's good to give yourself realistic like boundaries to be like, you know, if it doesn't work, don't you know, move pivot. Like, don't give up just because you're nervous.

Cade Hebert (10:46)
Yeah.

Yeah, so I'm curious to hear now about your spot as a board member on ~ is it pronounced SILC or do you say S I L C or

Jenn Ochs (10:57)
We say SILC.

Cade Hebert (10:58)
Okay.

Jenn Ochs (10:59)
I mean I like it it's very I'm new to the board so I'm still learning but I'm very much a proponent of independent living. So when I got an opportunity I was like, heck yeah, I'll join 'cause that's kinda my ~ passion. I want more people with disabilities to know

Cade Hebert (11:16)
Yeah.

Mm-hmm.

Jenn Ochs (11:24)
They deserve to live independently. They can have everything they want. They shouldn't be held back.

Quinna Phillips (11:31)

Can I also can we define what SILC stands for?

Jenn Ochs (11:34)

That State Independent Living Council

Quinna Phillips (11:38)

Okay, thank you.

Cade Hebert (11:39)

Okay. And that that's Colorado, right?

Jenn Ochs (11:41)

Yes. And I think, you know, every place has some kind of SILC Whether they got it, whatever whether each state is different, but every state has one.

Cade Hebert (11:42)

Right, okay.

Okay.

Right. Okay. Cool. So no, you go.

Quinna Phillips (11:56)

Can I ask how you got ~ sorry Kate to interrupt?

I know you've planned, but ~ can I ask how you actually got involved with the SILC? I mean, obviously you you've you're involved with your Center for Independent Living, but how did you get involved with that statewide council?

Cade Hebert (12:03)

Go ahead.

Jenn Ochs (12:09)

Yeah.

Well I was so excited about transitioning that I joined ~ Hake Buffs which is health care policy and financing. They're transition council just because I was like I need to know more. Need a group that's really for like coordinators, option counselors you know. But it's good to have an

ear in whatever's going on. Like leader of that group was the one who invited me to the SILC.

Quinna Phillips (12:47)

Okay. Awesome. Thanks.

Cade Hebert (12:47)

Yeah.

So if if the listeners of this episode could take away one message, what would you want that to be?

Jenn Ochs (12:56)

Just do it. Believe in yourself.

Cade Hebert (12:58)

Mm.

Gotcha. That's a great message. I have to agree. Yep.

Quinna Phillips (13:05)

I also have to just

Jenn Ochs (13:06)

And there's so many

resources. I mean seriously, when you go to your Center for Independent Living, it's amazing what you're eligible for that you had no idea about.

Cade Hebert (13:20)

Mm. Gotcha.

Quinna Phillips (13:21)

I cannot

emphasize that enough. I so agree with that point. There's so many things that even working in this world, I'm like, wait, I can have support with that or I can ask for that and well. Also have to have to interject as our as our resident historian. ~ I love to point out that, you know, ~ if you haven't heard of the Olmsted Act, that is one of the court cases that was a landmark for people with disabilities being

Jenn Ochs (13:30)

Hang out, right? Yep.

Cade Hebert (13:31)

Yeah.

Yeah.

Jenn Ochs (13:45)

I love the

home.

Quinna Phillips (13:46)

Yeah, being able to choose to stay in our communities and have that independent living. But I I, as amazing as that is, I do have to point out that past two years after I was born, ~ and I'm in my 20s, so this is something our contemporaries have fought for and continue to fight for. So as part of Jen's just do it advice, also know that you have every disabled person that has fought for this right for you behind you, that we need you to keep taking advantage of your rights like these so that we don't lose them.

Jenn Ochs (14:13)

Yes.

I agree. I mean, it's amazing to think that I'm in a transit class and like we went over the history of the disability movement. I just can't imagine not having curb cuts or like being able to live independently. So yeah, take advantage. We fought for it for you. So

Keep it going.

Quinna Phillips (14:42)

Yep. Absolutely.

Cade Hebert (14:44)

Yeah, totally.

Great. Well, we really appreciate you joining us, Jennifer, and sharing all the great information you have in part and your story and ~ everything like that around independent living. so thank you for your time and appreciate it.

Jenn Ochs (15:01)

Yeah, thank you guys.

Cade Hebert (15:03)

Mm-hmm. All right, we will see you next time.