

ACCESS TO INDEPENDENCE

OCTOBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Upcoming Events

Hawaii Branch

Event #1: Youth Peer Support Group

Description: Access to Independence welcomes all youth between the ages of 14 – 24 who have a disability to join us in this monthly event as we discuss various topics relating to transitioning into adulthood, experiences of living with a disability, coping strategies, and any other issues that you feel are relevant. We hope that you will see this as a safe, non-judgmental environment that can help you along your transition all while making friends in the process. Our program will be filled with guest speakers, skills building, recreational activities, and more in order to serve as a stepping stone for you to achieve your independence and be successful in life.

Date: 10/17/2024

Time: 2:00PM – 4:00PM HST

Location: 200 N Vineyard Blvd, Oahu Conference Room, 5th Floor, Honolulu, HI 96817

Contact: Carolina Riquelme, LTSS Coordinator, 808-369-9521,
criquelme@accesstoindependence.org

Event #2: Candidate Forum

Description: Access to Independence, in partnership with League of Women Voters of Hawaii, is hosting a Candidate Forum for the Upcoming General Election. Our aim is to provide the disability community with information about candidates' position on disability-related issues; encourage dialogue between candidates and voters; and highlight key issues affecting the disability community. This forum will take place on Zoom, with a watch party at our office.

Date: 10/23/2024

Time: 1:00PM – 3:00PM HST

Location: 200 N Vineyard Blvd, Oahu Conference Room, 5th Floor, Honolulu, HI 96817

Contact: Carolina Riquelme, LTSS Coordinator, 808-369-9521,
criquelme@accesstoindependence.org

Upcoming Events

Escondido Branch

Event #1: Disability Support Group

Description: Our disability support group aims to provide a platform for people living with disabilities to engage around different topics related to coping, overcoming hurdles, and sharing both positive and negative experiences. We invite our consumers to engage with us in a non-judgmental virtual atmosphere to enjoy a meaningful interaction with a diverse group of individuals!

Date: 10/25/2024 (Every Last Friday of the Month)

Time: 12:30 PM - 3 PM

Location: 235 W. 5th Ave. Ste 110, Escondido, CA 92025

Contact: Vivian Radam, ILSC, 619-704-2435, vradam@accesstoindpendence.org

Event #2: Voting Advocacy

Description: Come and get information on voting registration, ensure your voting location is fully accessible, and learn about absentee ballot procedures and more!

Date: 10/17/2024 (Every Third Thursday of the Month)

Time: 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Location: 235 W. 5th Ave. Ste 110, Escondido, CA 92025

Contact: Hermes Castro, Program Manager, 619-704-2058, hcastro@accesstoindpendence.org

Event #4: Benefits Options Counseling Program

Description: This program helps individuals learn about what benefits they are eligible for and navigate the application or appeals process including: Social Security, CalFresh, caregiving services, transportation services, healthcare applications, discounted utilities, and more!

Date: Call us today to schedule an appointment!

Location: 235 W. 5th Ave. Ste 110, Escondido, CA 92025

Contact: Vivian Radam, ILSC, 619-704-2435, vradam@accesstoindpendence.org

Upcoming Events

San Diego Branch

Event #2: Voting Advocacy

Description: Come and get information on voting registration, ensure your voting location is fully accessible, and learn about absentee ballot procedures and more!

Date: 9/19/2024 (Every Third Thursday of the Month)

Time: 1:30 PM - 2:30 PM

Location: 235 W. 5th Ave. Ste 110, Escondido, CA 92025

Contact: Antoni Neri, Community Organizing Coordinator, 619-704-2439,
aneri@accesstoindpendence.org

Event #3: Transition & Diversion Program

Description: Are you ready to transition out of a residential medical institution into your own independent home? This program is for you! Let Access to Independence advocate beside you in order to transition into your community successfully!

Date: Call us today to schedule an appointment!

Location: 235 W. 5th Ave. Ste 110, Escondido, CA 92025

Contact: Andrea Christopher, Transition & Diversion Coordinator, 619-704-2442,
achrsitopher@accesstoindpendence.org

Event #4: Benefits Options Counseling Program

Description: This program helps individuals learn about what benefits they are eligible for and navigate the application or appeals process including: Social Security, CalFresh, caregiving services, transportation services, healthcare applications, discounted utilities, and more!

Date: Call us today to schedule an appointment!

Location: 8885 Rio San Diego Dr. Ste 100, San Diego, CA 92108

Contact: Andrea Christopher, Transition & Diversion Coordinator, 619-704-2442,
achrsitopher@accesstoindpendence.org

Upcoming Events

Imperial Valley Branch

Event #1: Health & Wellness

Description: Join us to learn about the various programs offered by the Imperial Valley Housing Authority, including rental assistance options, with programs specifically for individuals with disabilities. We'll also cover what to expect during the application process, waitlist procedures, and lease-up steps.

Date: 10/16/2024

Location: 321 Wake Ave. El Centro, CA 92243

Contact: Judith Brown, Transition & Diversion Coordinator, (760) 618-0167,
jbrown@accesstoindependence.org

Event #2: Voting Advocacy

Description: Come and get information on voting registration, ensure your voting location is fully accessible, and learn about absentee ballot procedures and more!

Date: Call us today to learn more!

Location: 321 Wake Ave. El Centro, CA 92243

Contact: (760)768-2044

Event #3: Enhanced Vision Program

Description: Access to Independence offers a program exclusively for individuals who are 55 years or older, with vision loss or blindness. Program services include; information and referral, self-advocacy, activities of daily living, adaptive equipment/assistive technology, and more!

Date: Call us today to learn more!

Location: 321 Wake Ave. El Centro, CA 92243

Contact: Susana Garcia, LTSS Coordinator, (760)965-4199, sgarcia@accesstoindependence.org

Event #4: Transition & Diversion Program

Description: Our Transition & Diversion program safely supports and assists consumers throughout their process from their transition back into the community and safely in their home. Our Diversion program is intended to support individuals with disabilities who are high risk of becoming homeless or institutionalized. We assist individuals with remaining independent, and safely in their home.

Date: Call us today to learn more!

Location: 321 Wake Ave. El Centro, CA 92243

Contact: Judith Brown, Transition & Diversion Coordinator, 760-618-0167,
jbrown@accesstoindependence.org



SAVE THE DATE

Annual AT & Disability Resource Fair

November 14, 2024

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Imperial Valley Mall

3451 S. Dogwood Rd.

El Centro, CA 92243

Join us to celebrate and bring awareness to Disability & Employment Awareness month! Learn about different assistive technologies and local resources available in the community! There will be informational booths and resource tables from other organizations/agencies and employers and job seekers.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity!



www.accesstoindependence.org

SUCCESS STORY



BENEFITS COUNSELING PROGRAM

Our Benefits Counseling program provides consumers with the knowledge and skills to seek and apply for benefits as well as how to self-advocate for yourself! This program will teach you about the application process for Social Security, CalFresh, Utilities, Section 8, In-Home Services and Supports (IHSS), Public Transportation and Healthcare!

**For more information,
contact your local
Access to
Independence office!**

Following a stroke that led to the loss of the consumer's nursing career and housing, a consumer was exploited by financial fraud upon receiving social security benefits. She appointed an Organizer as her representative payee but later sought to terminate the arrangement due to late payments and accumulated late fees. A meeting was arranged, resulting in the representative payee's agreement to relinquish their role. However, the representative regained control of her finances after falsely reporting her as homeless and financially incompetent to Adult Protective Services (APS). With the consumer's authorization, I contacted APS and confirmed no record of the consumer in their database. Despite nearly giving up, the consumer and I persevered, ultimately achieving victory in her three year battle with Organizer and Social Security Administration to self-manage her benefits.

HAWAII BRANCH



*Image text:
Group of 5
women
smiling at
the camera.*

The Guam Department of Integrated Services for Individuals with Disabilities (DISID) visited Access to Independence, Hawaii office on August 19th. We had the Director Michelle Perez and Special Projects Coordinator Stacy Flores come to learn more about Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and open a partnership with their organization for when they hopefully start their own CIL in Guam.

*Image text:
Woman is sitting
on a driving
simulator with
Program
Manager,
Leelynn standing
beside her.*



HAWAII BRANCH



Image text: Access to Independence staff and Kupuna and Caregiver Resource individuals smiling at camera behind table..



Image text: Program Manager, Leelynn, standing with microphone by a podium.

The Hawaii office participated in the Kupuna and Caregiver Resource Fair, hosted by Hale Hau'oli Hawaii, on Saturday September 21. We had the opportunity to present about our programs and services, connect with our Kupuna in our area, and network with partner organizations that also work with Kupuna!



Image text: Image of the back of a person at the Access to Independence booth.



Image text: Image of the back of Access to Independence staff at the booth.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM 2024)

San Diego, California - October 1, 2024 - Access to Independence announces it is joining the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy in recognizing National Disability Employment Awareness Month, an annual awareness campaign that takes place each October. The purpose of National Disability Employment Awareness Month is to educate about disability employment issues and celebrate the many and varied contributions of America's workers with disabilities. This year's theme is "Access to Good Jobs for All."

The history of NDEAM traces back to 1945, when it started as a week and focused only on people with physical disabilities. Later, it expanded to a full month, and its name and scope evolved to acknowledge the importance of increasing the workforce inclusion of people with all nature of disabilities.

"Our communities and economy are strengthened by the inclusion of all people, including people with disabilities," said Assistant Secretary of Labor for Disability Employment Policy Taryn M. Williams. "Their contributions have historically been vital to our nation's success and are more important today than ever. We must build an accessible, equitable economy that fully includes the talent and drive of those with disabilities."

Reflecting this year's theme, throughout the month, Access to Independence will be engaging in a variety of activities to educate its our community on disability employment issues and its commitment to an accessible and equitable work culture. These efforts include participating in the NDEAM job fair.

Employers and employees in all industries can learn more about how to participate in National Disability Employment Awareness Month and ways they can promote its messages—during October and throughout the year—by visiting dol.gov/NDEAM.



WE'RE HIRING

Are you ready to be part of something extraordinary? We are thrilled to announce that our wonderful organization is expanding, and we are on the lookout for passionate individuals to join our dynamic team!

Now Hiring:

1. **Youth Transition Coordinator (Location: Honolulu, HI)**
2. **Information & Assistance Coordinator (Location: Honolulu, HI)**
3. **Long-Term Services and Supports Coordinator (Location: San Diego, CA)**
4. **Information & Assistance Coordinator (Location: San Diego, CA)**

Why Join Us? At Access to Independence, we take pride in fostering a positive and collaborative work environment. Our team is not just colleagues; we are a family that supports and uplifts one another. By joining us, you'll become an integral part of an organization dedicated to making a meaningful impact on the lives of those we serve.

Benefits:

- Competitive salary
- Comprehensive health and wellness benefits
- Opportunities for professional development
- A supportive and inclusive workplace culture
- The chance to contribute to impactful programs and initiatives

How to Apply: Ready to take the next step in your career? You can apply for these exciting opportunities in two simple ways:

- Visit our Indeed job postings.
- Email your resume to jobs@accesstoindependence.org.

Don't miss the chance to be part of our incredible journey! We encourage candidates from diverse backgrounds to apply. Help us continue making a difference in the communities we serve.

If you have any questions or need further information, please feel free to reach out to us at accessmedia@accesstoindependence.org

Join us in shaping a brighter future! We look forward to welcoming new members to our fantastic team.



MY ENERGY CENTER IS HERE!

SDG&E's My Account has transitioned to My Energy Center. This safe and secure portal makes it easy to manage your energy usage and costs.

While the My Energy Center portal is an upgrade, rest assured that the security and convenient features and services you know from My Account remain intact – like viewing and paying your bill, Auto Pay, paperless billing and scheduling services online or on the app.

Working with the region's two Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) – Clean Energy Alliance (CEA) and San Diego Community Power (SDCP) –

My Energy Center features a new level of transparency to help you better understand your bill and manage your energy use.

My Energy Center customer benefits include:

- User-friendly breakdown of charges including your energy delivery from SDG&E and your electric usage, whether you receive service from a CCA or SDG&E.
- Greater insights into your gas and electricity usage patterns to help you find ways to save energy and lower your bill.
- Ease of access through the SDGE.com, SDCP and CEA websites, or directly at [MyEnergyCenter.com](https://www.myenergycenter.com).

If you had previously been enrolled in My Account, you can simply log in with your existing username and password. If you already downloaded the SDG&E mobile app, it will automatically update to the new My Energy Center app.

For more info, visit sdge.com/MEC.