

**Future of RICCs/Self-Advocacy in Michigan**  
**(notes from discussion that took place during the Region 1,  
4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Regional meeting, August 21, 2015):**

Speakers: DD Council Director Vendella Collins, DD Council Chair Kristen Columbus, DD Council Board Member David Taylor

-Recap 2009-2010: Council's discussion about what are RICCs really doing.

--Are RICCs real self-advocacy in Michigan?

--Are RICCs really lead by people with disabilities?

--Majority of RICCs are lead by agencies (some RICCs are lead by people with disabilities)

--The Council is funding self-advocacy that is truly being lead by people with disabilities

-Planning for the next 5 year plan 2017-2021

--What do RICC members need to be true self-advocacy networks?

--We are making changes because RICCs have been the same structure for a long time, some are changing, have changed, many have not. A retro fit has not necessarily been working. We need a new structure that is really and truly self-advocacy.

-Temperature of the DD Council

--Beyond Tokenism project (A study in the current 5 year plan to address: 'is the Council supporting people with high and complex needs. Are we being a role model for other people in the state?'). Project found that the RICCs are having an identity crisis; the RICCs started with 'everyone is welcome', but also saying RICCs are a self-advocacy network. It's hard to be both of those things.

-A lot of questions that people have about the new plan don't have answers because the people who are making the decisions don't know yet. The Council can't make the decision, people with disabilities need to be involved and have a say.

-The change will give people with disabilities the chance to be in the driver's seat. People with disabilities will have an authentic and genuine voice. Agencies really will be in more of a support role.

-The current 5 year plan ends on Sept 30, 2016. RICC funding ends Sept 30, 2016. The RICCs will no longer be funded after Sept 30, 2016.

-Vendella fully expects that some RICCs now will be fully engaged in the self-advocacy network. Some RICCs may choose to fully be a part of the self-advocacy network. RICCs may very well be called "RICCs" in 2018, it depends on what the self-advocacy network decides. Vendella doesn't have a crystal ball, it all depends on the network. RICCs vary amongst the state and they may not choose not to be involved in the self-advocacy network. We are not trying to leave individuals behind.

-The Ad-Hoc self-advocacy group is currently tasked with:

--What happens to individuals who's RICC doesn't join the network?

---How do we figure that piece out and keep them involved?

-How will we have the funding we need to go to Lansing for the events like the Legislative Event after Sept. 30, 2016? Vendella says she doesn't know what the budget will look like, but going forward the self-advocacy network will decide how it gets funding to the community. This is the last year that the Council (as we know it) will be involved in setting a budget for the RICCs. The next plan will focus on developing a statewide network before developing local affiliate chapters. It seems like setting up a statewide network will be a process and it's very likely that the network will not be set up right away to start giving out funds to chapters or creating chapters right away.

-This change reflects people with disabilities being involved themselves.

-The DD Act says that the Council must support a network of self-advocates, but it does not state that the Council must financially support the network. In some states, the self-advocacy network is independent from the Council and get their funding in a number of ways (their Council being one of those ways), in other states the network is solely reliant on the Council for funding.

-Other Councils fund & run legislative days

-Why won't the Council fund Walk a Mile? Part of that funding process is between Terry & the RICCs. If there are 27 RICCs with 27 different work plans, Terry has negotiated the activities & funds on a RICC by RICC basis. There were some universal decisions and that Walk a Mile was one of them. Walk a Mile isn't necessarily an outlet for the DD Council, it's a voice for the CMHSPs. In the past the Board Association (CMHSPs) has funded participation for the Walk a Mile-funding for this must come from them-not the DD Council. Walk a Mile was started by individuals who have mental illnesses. We need to use our small amount of funds to help Legislators, etc. hear the voice of people with developmental disabilities.

-What if the self-advocacy network wants to go back to the RICC structure/partnerships with agencies? That's fine, it won't be a directive of the Council, the focus is that it will come from the self-advocacy network. The Council won't be prescriptive to the RICCs and tell them what to do.

-People with DD have great opportunities and strength to be involved in their own lives and self-advocacy will look like in Michigan. We are talking about empowering and engaging; people choosing. This change is about empowering people, NOT taking power away. There are a lot of areas in the state where people are used to being told what to do. We will have to bring these folks along and around. We need to have a cultural shift. -Vendella

-This change in MI is like taking control of your person centered plan vs having a person centered plan and having being talked over/not really in control over it. The self-advocacy network will have the power & say.

*-Notes by Jen Gossett, Region 1 Coordinator, Washtenaw Association for Community Advocacy*