

2022-2023 REGIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL BI-ANNUAL REPORT



"To improve the quality of services and supports for people with disabilities"

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Regional Quality Council History

In 2016, legislation was passed to address the state's need for regional quality councils to provide technical assistance, monitor and improve the quality of services for people with disabilities, and monitor and improve person-centered outcomes and quality of life indicators for people with disabilities.

In July 2016, The Arc Minnesota, acting as the fiscal agent signed a contract to establish two Quality Councils (The Region 10 Quality Council in Southeast Minnesota and the Metro Quality Council). The Arc Northland also signed a contract to establish a third Regional Quality Council in the Northeast Region of the state of Minnesota (the Arrowhead Quality Council) and act as fiscal agent. The Region 10 Quality Council services Olmsted, Wabasha and Houston Counties. The Metro Regional Quality Council serves Hennepin, Dakota, and Scott Counties. The Arrowhead Regional Quality Council serves Aitkin, Carlton, Cook, Itasca, Koochiching, Lake and Pine Counties. This contract continued through June 2021.

In January of 2022, a new contract was signed that included a deliverable for The Arc Minnesota to establish a fourth quality council in the West Central Region of Minnesota. Work began to staff and re-engage existing councils, and develop the new council in the West Central Region as outlined in the new contract deliverables seen below in the next section of this report. West Central RQC started meeting in September 2022. The West Central Quality County serves Clay, Grant, Otter Tail, Polk and Pope Counties.

Virtual Regional Quality Council meetings are held monthly. You can find more information about the Regional Quality Councils and can access their meeting minutes for FY2016-2023 on the RQC website at [Regional Quality Council - Disability Advocacy in MN \(qualitycouncilmn.org\)](https://qualitycouncilmn.org)

Regional Quality Councils are led by a diverse stakeholder group that all have a vested interest in improving the lives of disabled people in Minnesota. Members include:

- Disabled People
- Family Members
- Advocacy Agencies
- Community Members
- County Representatives
- Minnesota State Representatives



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Grantee Duties/Workplan

Objective	Description of Tasks and Deliverables
1. Identify key barriers to people having choice in HCBS, and develop an action plan to address two critical barriers.	<p>Identify issues and barriers that impede Minnesotans who have disabilities from optimizing choice of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collaborate with existing stakeholders and recruit new stakeholders. Stakeholders will be composed of people with disabilities who have experience with HCBS, family members, advocates, service providers, other community members, and lead agencies – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1 b) Intentionally seek the experience and perspective of diverse populations - especially those experiencing inequities and/or disparities – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1 c) Gather and review new data about quality of life and optimizing choice through feedback sessions, focus groups, community conversations, informational interviews --Y1Q3 d) Determine priorities and develop implementation plan for areas chosen -- Y1Q4 e) Begin implementation of identified Quality Improvement topic – Y2Q1-Y2Q4
2. Educate and support people with disabilities and other stakeholders in learning how people with disabilities can direct their lives and be active members of their community.	<p>Promote informed decision making, autonomy, and self-direction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> f) Collaborate with Region 10 Quality Assurance to develop accessible resources and share with stakeholders in each RQC region – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1 g) Identify, gather, and share other relevant resources related to informed decision making -- Y1Q2 h) Engage with youth, teens, and young adults who have disabilities in learning how to plan for and direct their lives – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q3
3. Share reports and data from various sources with RQC members to review, analyze and discuss. RQC staff and Members will understand their role in reporting critical incidents, and will be able to report critical incidents as mandated reporters	<p>Analyze and review quality outcomes and critical incident data, and immediately report incidents of life safety concerns to the Department of Human Services Licensing Division</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review of reports and data from sources such as NCI, and Olmstead Study b) RQC staff will train RQC members, interns, and volunteers about their role in mandated reporting, including the process for reporting
4. Support the Culture of Safety Pilot Project by hosting Data Action Groups for participating counties	<p>Through participation in the state's Culture of Safety Regional Pilot Project, inform a comprehensive system for effective incident reporting, investigation, analysis and follow-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Continue Region 10 and Metro RQC collaboration with the Department of Human Services Culture of Safety Regional Pilot Project to analyze themes and give recommendations around critical incidents and safety – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1



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	b) Develop a Data Action Group in West Central RQC in collaboration with DHS Culture of Safety Pilot Project – Y1Q2
5. Actively partner on agency initiatives to improve the disability services system	<p>Collaborate on projects and initiatives to advance priorities shared with state agencies, lead agencies, educational institutions, advocacy organizations, community partners, and other entities engaged in disability service improvements</p> <p>a) Establish and maintain partnerships and engagement in initiatives such as the Data Action Group for the Culture of Safety Pilot Project; Centers of Excellence; Cohort for Positive Behavioral Supports and Person- Centered Practices; Self- Advocacy Groups etc.</p>
6. Establish and strengthen partnerships and relationships through community outreach and engagement to broaden awareness, and foster support and collaboration in improving the lives of people with disabilities in the state of MN	<p>Establish partnerships and working relationships with individuals and groups in the regions</p> <p>a) Maintain and develop Regional Quality Councils through outreach and engagement with diverse regional partners whose values and missions align with the work of the RQCs – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1</p> <p>b) Identify and initiate new partnerships and relationships with people who access Home and Community- Based Services and are underrepresented in decision-making processes. For example, people who live in Rural communities, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, low income, people who are experiencing homelessness, those who were formerly incarcerated, Veterans. -- Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1</p> <p>c) Establish a new Regional Quality Council in the West Central Region by partnering with Otter Tail, and Clay counties (with a possibility of Polk County joining) -- Y1Q2</p>
7. Learn about regional needs and identify a quality improvement area.	<p>Identify and implement regional and statewide quality improvement projects</p> <p>a) Identify and research existing data around regional needs to inform quality improvement initiatives. -- Y1Q3</p> <p>b) Initiate feedback from community partners through learning opportunities such as feedback sessions, focus groups, community conversations, informational interviews, etc. to learn about regional needs to determine regional priorities – Y1Q3-Y2Q4</p> <p>c) Implement a minimum of two quality improvement initiatives per region -- Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1</p> <p>d) Convene all RQCs statewide at least twice a year to identify and address statewide needs</p> <p>e) Collaborate to identify a concern or barrier to quality of life for people with disabilities that is common statewide, and work together to research and implement a statewide quality improvement initiative – Y1Q4-Y2Q4</p>
8. Center the lived experience of people who have disabilities in the policymaking process so that systems and services are more equitable, accessible, and person-centered	<p>Transform systems and drive social change in alignment with the disability rights and disability justice movements identified by leaders who have disabilities</p> <p>a) Identify at least one RQC member who has lived experience to engage in The Arc Minnesota's grassroots advocacy network, The Capitol Connectors, and support engagement of other RQC members in legislative action</p>



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<p>9. Collaborate with Region 10 Quality Assurance and Self-Advocacy groups to develop and implement training around support options</p>	<p>Provide information and training programs for persons who have disabilities and their families and legal representatives on formal and informal support options and quality expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Collaborate with Region 10 Quality Assurance to develop accessible resources and share with stakeholders in each RQC region – Ongoing, beginning Y1Q1 b) Identify, gather, and share relevant resources related to formal and informal support options -- Y1Q2 c) Engage with youth, teens, and young adults, as well as their families, to learn about informal and formal support options and how to plan for and direct quality in their lives -- Y1Q3-Y2Q4
<p>10. Inform state agencies and other key decision makers about best practices and barriers in order to better support people and systems change</p>	<p>Make recommendations to state agencies and other key decision-makers regarding disability services and supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop recommendations for quality improvement of services and supports for people with disabilities. Include recommendations in a written report offered to the Department of Human Services, legislators, and other key decision makers every two years. b) Meet twice a year with DHS to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Review status of and compliance with Minnesota Statutes 256B.097 and discuss necessary updates and changes ii. Review effectiveness of communication and collaboration between Regional Quality Councils, Department of Human Services, and lead agencies and make recommendations for improvements
<p>11. Inform state legislators about the activities and outcomes of their work and make recommendations for improvement of services and supports for people with disabilities</p>	<p>Submit a report every two years to legislative committees with jurisdiction over disability services on the status, outcomes, improvement priorities, and activities in the region. Through collaboration of the four Regional Quality Councils, submit a report which will outline their work, outcomes of quality improvement work, lessons learned, recommendations developed, and any upcoming quality improvement priorities and projects.</p>
<p>12. Ensure that people with disabilities regard the RQCs as objective sources of support in advocacy to resolve concerns and complaints with the quality of their services and supports</p>	<p>Support people by advocating to resolve complaints between the counties, providers, persons who access services, and their families and legal representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Leverage partnerships and collaboration to advocate and act as a resource for people with disabilities and their families to resolve complaints and concerns regarding barriers to quality services and supports b) Monitor complaints that are received through the RQC website, and respond in an appropriate and timely manner
<p>13. Gain support and partnership in Regional Quality Council Initiatives and ensure RQC teams are provided training and</p>	<p>Recruit, train, and assign duties to Regional Quality Council teams, including council members, interns, and volunteers, taking into account the skills necessary for the team members to be successful in this work</p>



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informationthat will allow them to be successful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Utilize already established teams and trainings to continue the work of the RQCs. Staff will continue to recruit and train new members, interns and volunteers as needed. Current recruitment and training materials will be updated as needed. b) Recruit and train new staff – Y1Q1 c) Recruit and train members for the newly-developed West Central Regional Quality Council. Work with partners to establish a diverse and effective council. Council will consist of Lead Agencies, People with Disabilities, Families, Advocates, and Providers. -- Y1Q2 d) Establish and develop guidelines/expectations specific to the newly formed West Central RQC -- Y1Q3
14. The Arc Minnesota will continue as the fiscal agent	<p>Identify a fiscal agent through which funds will be managed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The Arc Minnesota will manage funds appropriated to the Regional Quality Councils b) The Arc Minnesota will hire and provide oversight of RQC Staff c) Assure that the work of the RQCs and The Arc Minnesota are aligned while addressing region specific needs



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Collaboration of Regional Quality Councils

Although each Regional Quality Council has their activities and priorities that are specific to their regions, they also work closely together to collaborate on several initiatives including the following:

Statewide Staffing Shortage Workgroup -- In November 2022, a minimum of two members from each of the four Regional Quality Councils in the state of Minnesota volunteered to form a workgroup that would meet monthly to address a statewide issue related to people with disabilities. The statewide issue that was decided on was the Statewide Staffing Shortage as staffing shortages impact people in all areas of their lives (health and wellbeing, employment, social etc.). The RQC staff and RQC intern facilitated a World Café activity where we invited all RQC members across the state to come together meet and give their thoughts on three questions:

- What has been your personal experience with the staffing shortage?
- What creative or surprising positive outcomes have you seen related to the staffing shortage?
- What creative strategies have you seen or been trying?

Responses given during the World Café can be found here: [Workforce Shortage World Cafe](#).

Following the World Café, the workgroup decided to focus on exploring legislation that could make a positive impact on the current workforce situation as it related to people with disabilities. The workgroup selected specific legislative bills to track, and wanted to translate the bills to plain language to make them more accessible and easier to understand for all people. The workgroup felt that if people were able to better understand bills that may impact their lives, they would be able to better advocate for themselves and educate others. The bills the workgroup decided they wanted to track and translate to plain language were:

- HF999/SF1015 – DWRS Rate Increase Bill
- FH813/SF993 – Workforce Recruitment and Retention for Providers
- HF716/SF654 – Expanding Access to Shared Services
- HF1384/SF1272 – Reform MA to incentivize Employment

Due to time constraints, the workgroup was unable to get the bills translated to plain language in time to share with others before the 2023 legislative session wrapped up. To make an immediate impact, the workgroup decided to switch focus, create a letter of support around the tracked bills that were still being considered in the Omnibus Bill, and share the letter with Chairs Hoffman, Noor, and Members of the Human Services Conference Committee via written testimony, in person meetings, and direct emails. The letter of support can be found here: [Letter of Support – Regional Quality Councils](#).



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Following the legislative session, members wanted to revisit the purpose of the Statewide Staffing Shortage Workgroup to help determine next action items. The workgroup developed the following purpose statement:

To promote the value of direct care workers and address the workforce shortage to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

We will do this by:

- Engaging and educating legislators using data driven information/resources to help them make informed decisions.

The workgroup brainstormed strategies to address this purpose statement. The first strategy the group decided on was to:

- Engage providers and direct care workers to get feedback and input around the Staffing Shortage by:
 - Developing a survey for Providers
 - Developing a survey for DSPs
 - Engaging Providers, DSPs and other stakeholders at the 2023 Minnesota Gathering for Person Centered Practices in Marketplace Learning Sessions using survey questions that were developed

On October 24, 2023 staff from the Arrowhead RQC (Northern Region), and staff from Region 10 RQC (Southern Region) held Learning Sessions to gather feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders at the 2023 Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices around the staffing shortage.

- A plain language PowerPoint summary of the feedback was developed and can be found here: [2023 Gathering PowerPoint Summary – Staffing shortage](#)
- A more detailed compilation of the feedback can be found here: [2023 Gathering Detailed Feedback](#)
- The workgroup will use this information to inform next action items as we move into 2024

Collaborative Safety – In November of 2020, Regional Quality Council Staff completed training offered by DHS around the movement of Culture of Safety with the intent that the Regional Quality Councils would become the first Data Action Groups for this Pilot Project. The Data Action Groups began meeting in January 2021 to review information pertaining to critical safety incidents reported in participating counties. The purpose of the Data Action Groups are to review systemic themes and illustrative examples and make considerations and/or recommendations to the Culture of Safety Steering Committee to:

- Inform the future of the project
- Systemic changes to reduce critical incidents

The Data Action Group for the newly formed West Central Region began meeting in September of 2023.



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The Data Action Groups continued meeting through December 2023. After reviewing the data, we discussed high-level considerations around common themes that may have been an underlying factor in the critical incidents that were reviewed.

Recommendations offered by the Regional Quality councils around reported elopement incidents can be found here: [DHS-8495A-ENG \(Culture of Safety annual report 2023\) \(state.mn.us\)](https://dhs.8495A-ENG (Culture of Safety annual report 2023) (state.mn.us)). The Regional Quality Councils look forward to continuing this work with the Department of Human Services in 2024.

Website Content Maintenance – The State and Regional Quality Councils realize the importance of informing stakeholders of who we are and what our purpose and goals are, and how we are going to achieve our goals. The website not only offers information about State and Regional Quality Council activities and events, but it also offers resource information to individuals with disabilities, families of people with disabilities, and professionals who work for people with disabilities. In 2023, Regional Quality Council staff contracted with a new website developer to update the RQC website and improve accessibility. Please visit the Minnesota State Quality Council website at: <http://qualitycouncilmn.org>

Regional Quality Council Newsletter -- The Regional Quality Councils collaborated to publish our first semiannual newsletter in June 2023. Each issue will share information about the work that each of RQC's have been engaged in ([Draft 1 RQC Newsletter 2023 \(arcminnesota.org\)](https://arcminnesota.org))

2024 Collaboration Opportunity:

The three RQCs hosted by The Arc Minnesota will partner with the University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration to support Person- Centered Practices and Positive Behavioral Supports by forming Regional Capacity Building teams that will develop recommendations for systems transformation and change.

The Regional Capacity Building (RCB) Manager will work with the Metro, Region 10, and West Central Regional Quality Council staff and members to:

- Form Regional Capacity Building Teams to develop a plan for Regional Capacity Building in Region 10, West Central, and Metro areas
- Coordinate, convene, and facilitate Regional Capacity Building Meetings
- Work with a facilitator to create a PATH for the Metro and West Central RQC teams to explore regional capacity building efforts
- Expand on the training offered by ICI in Region 10 by implementing a process for interviewing people served to learn about their lived experience, perspectives on quality in the HCBS system, and functional changes that could be made to improve their experience with their current service provider(s) and/or the broader disability service system
- Work with ICI and RQC advocates to create a plan for self-advocates who may lead direction of statewide training efforts:
 - Provide stipends for advocates to participate in leadership activities
 - Co-create plan for advocate advisory system in Year 1



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- Participate in tool development to evaluate quality of life of persons supported by organizations that participated in person-centered cohort
 - Co-create a system for expanding training with Region 10 organizations using the HCBS modules for person-centered organizations
- Develop recommendations for policymakers and others who influence decisions about the disability service system to improve quality based on experience of people accessing services
- Develop accessible information, tools, and resources about person-centered practices, self-direction in disability services, individual rights and advocacy in a service setting or system, etc. for people accessing services in the HCBS system



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Arrowhead Regional Quality Council

Counties Served: Carlton, St. Louis, Lake and Cook	
Regional Council Staff: Becky Lambert, Director	
Beth Johnson, Coordinator	
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Council Members	
Self-Advocates	Family Members
Kate Wallin	Mary Martin
Shawn Stanich	Connie Kotonias
Jenae Hackensmith	
Meredith Kujala-Little Not Less	
County/State Representatives	
Amy Patenaude-St Louis	Bethany McKeon-Carlton
Beth Swanson-Lake	Kerwin McKay-DHS
Laura Nelson-Cook	
Providers	
Kristie Buchman-Choice Unlimited	Ann Dahl-UDAC, Inc
Nicole Lind-Residential Services, Inc.	Josh Howie-Trillium Works
Michelle McDonald-Lake County DAC, Inc	
Advocacy	
Sheri Cooke-Lighthouse Center for Vital Living	Amanda Crosby-Arc Northland
Please find the ARQC meeting minutes at: https://www.qualitycouncilmn.org/arrowhead/arrowhead-meeting-minutes/	

Introduction to the ARQC 2022-2023

Considerable time during the first year of the grant was spent on rebuilding and reconnecting with the ARQC membership, along with reestablishing relationships with those involved in Quality Improvement projects supported by the ARQC. ARQC staff reviewed the updated our workplan with ARQC members and other interested parties, highlighting the focus on the qualitative work that would begin. The ARQC engaged with and learned from people with disabilities and their supports through in-person workgroups and gatherings focused on barriers to person-centered services and education on person-centered practices, accessible housing and transportation, and self-advocacy.



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Two workgroups were established in Y1/Q1, the Data Action workgroup and the Person-Centered Practices workgroup, along with a statewide workgroup, addressing the direct care worker shortage, established in Y1/Q4.

- The Data Action group worked with DHS to review critical incident data from 245D settings and evaluate the systemic influences that contribute to them, assessing the need for Level 3 change.
- The Person-Centered Practices workgroup is building on lessons learned during the first five years of the ARQC grant: a need for expanded options for person-centered trainings, self-advocate leadership and educational opportunities in PCT, PBS and legislative action, and disability housing rights.

These workgroups and the quality improvement projects associated with them will be described below.

Quality Improvement Efforts

The Person-Centered Practices group is working to respond to the needs identified during projects in previous years. One need identified was that small providers, housing and transportations workers, family members, and most importantly, people with disabilities are often left out of the traditional 2-day Person-Centered Thinking training. The ARQC identified three main quality improvement initiatives within the region to focus on:

1. Developing and implementing an overview of person-centered practices
2. Supporting tenants' rights and tenant councils in subsidized housing
3. Self-Advocacy leadership and education

Person-Centered Overviews

The ARQC is developing short, accessible overviews of person-centered concepts targeted toward specific groups. These groups will include disabled people, small Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) providers, transit workers, and housing providers/caretakers who are often unable to commit to a full 2-day training in Person-Centered Thinking. The ARQC is developing these trainings in partnership with the University of Minnesota -- Institute on Community Integration, and the St Louis County Regional Cohort. The trainings will be implemented across the Arrowhead region by ARQC staff and trainers.

The overview is in draft form and will be presented to several different groups representing the target audiences for feedback and advice during Q4 2023-Q1 2024. Final overview will be completed before the end of Q2 2024. Q2 began talking to organizations interested in the material or ARQC staff doing presentation/training.

[Draft PERSON-CENTERED PRACTICES OVERVIEW.pptx](#)



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Tenant Education and Councils

Work continues in Grand Marais, MN as the ARQC assists tenants with disabilities in learning and promoting their rights with property owners, managers, and on-site caretakers who were negligent in caring for the tenants and keeping the facility in working condition. During 2022-2023, ARQC staff traveled to Grand Marais 1-3 times a month to meet with residents and help facilitate Tenant Council meetings. These meetings were held in The Hub of Grand Marais or in a tenant's apartment/common area. ARQC provided flyers that could be filled in with meeting times and days. Meetings include introductions and check-ins, ARQC staff share resources and information, role-playing how to handle situations with management, and how to handle anger when you do not see results. Due to the turnover in management companies at the apartment buildings, the tenants and ARQC staff have had to reestablish communication with property owners, managers, and caretakers several times.

The ARQC staff continued collaboration with HOME Line MN ([Free Legal Help for Renters — HOME Line \(homelinemn.org\)](https://www.homelinemn.org)) by connecting tenants to attorneys and organizers and hosting speakers from the organization on tenants' rights. Collaboration also began with the Housing Justice Center ([Home - Housing Justice Center \(hjcmn.org\)](https://www.hjcmn.org)) in January 2023 to provide legal advice and solutions for unsafe and inaccessible housing to tenants.

Self-Advocate Education and Leadership

ARQC staff performed outreach within Duluth, Grand Marais and Hibbing to form groups of self-advocates who would be interested in developing plain-language documents on positive support topics. The Duluth and Grand Marais groups began work on developing documents about Person-Centered Thinking (PCT) and Person-Centered Plans. A third group in Hibbing was meant to develop a document about Positive Behavior Supports but did not materialize. Participants in this group receive a per-meeting stipend for their attendance and feedback. The ARQC staff present current documents on the topics being reviewed and then take feedback from participants to develop a new document. What the ARQC has learned is that people with disabilities have heard about PCT related topics but have not been given an opportunity to learn what PCT is or how it can positively impact their quality of life.

This project has given self-advocates a voice in how they want to see and understand Person-Centered Thinking and Positive Supports in their lives and communities. These documents, when completed, will be available as a digital resource across the state of Minnesota. The ARQC will continue this project in collaboration with the Institute on Community Integration, and will expand to other topics with the intent to provide information in different mediums including infographics and videos.

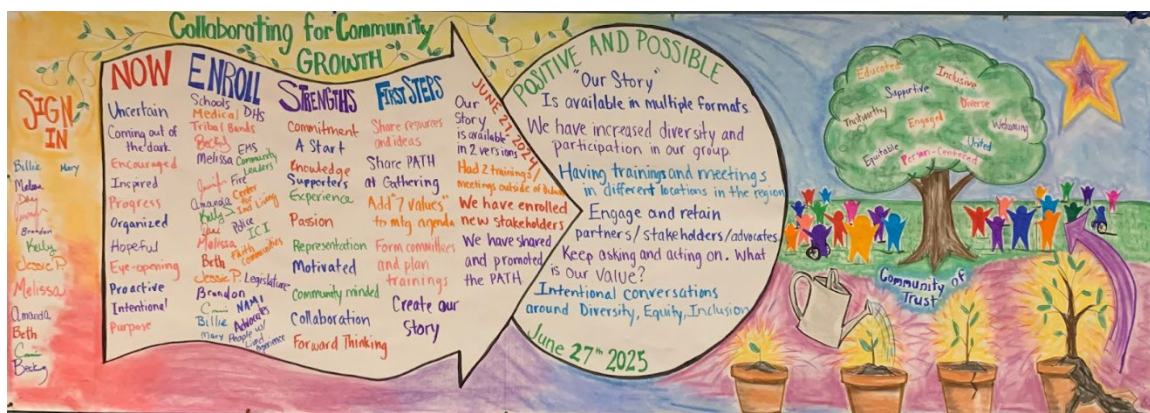
Outreach, Community Engagement and Training Efforts

Outreach and Community Engagement Efforts

The Arrowhead staff organized and participated in several Outreach and Community Engagement activities including:

- 03-03-23 ARQC self-advocate and staff testified in front of the MN House Transportation Committee in support of the Northern Light Express, a high-speed train that would run Between Duluth to Minneapolis. This bill was passed!

- Promoting Disability Voting Rights Week September 11 –15
- ARQC staff supported and drove self-advocates to the SAM Conference at Mystic Lake Casino
- Collaborated with the Institute on Community Integration to plan, promote, and
- ARQC staff promoting the MII grant, and on the Advisory Committee
- ARQC staff involvement/collaboration with Rev Up MN and Capital Connectors hosting Candidate Forums and Zoom meetings to educate people on the Disability Legislative agenda and voting rights
- ARQC staff facilitating the bi-monthly Northeast MN Person-Centered Community of Practice (MNPCCoP) cohort
- 6-27-23 ARQC Staff participated in developing a PATH with the 6-27-23 ARQC Staff participated in developing a PATH with the Northeast MN Regional PCP (Person Centered Practices) Team



- ARQC staff attend Commission meetings at City Hall in Duluth MN to support local BIPOC communities and their interests.
- ARQC staff attend Juneteenth celebrations in Duluth, MN and Superior, WI
- 1-10-23 ARQC staff started collaboration with HomeLINE MN to develop a VISTA position to promote tenant rights and education in the Arrowhead beginning in 2024.
- 2-3-23 and 3-21-23 Collaboration meeting with the Housing Justice Center to discuss Birchwood Apartments and help with tenant councils.
- 3-21-23 ARQC staff was at the Resource Center in Duluth tabling for the ARQC and The Arc Northland
- 5-17-23 ARQC staff presented to Region 3 at their Quarterly Update on the work of the ARQC and our work on the Statewide Staffing Shortage Workgroup
- 6-8-23 ARQC staff participated in a Food Audit Access Walk in Virginia, MN
- 7-26-23 ARQC staff attended and tabled for The Arc Northland and ARQC at the ADA Celebration in Superior, WI at Northwoods Technical College
- ARQC staff presented to Pine County social services team on the work and priorities of the ARQC in hopes of getting a new ARQC council member from this County/area.



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- 5-4-23 ARQC staff presented to People First on the ARQC and what opportunities we have for self-advocates.
- 6-6-23 ARQC staff presented to the Region 10 RQC (Regional Quality Councils) on our Tenant Council work in Grand Marais with Birchwood apartments.
- 6-13-23 ARQC staff presented with the other RQC to Jason Flint from DHS on the progress we have made in our work plans
- 10-24-23 ARQC staff presented a session at the MN Gathering on the ARQC grant and developing Person-Centered overviews.
- 10-24-23 ARQC staff held a Learning Marketplace at the MN Gathering on the MN Workforce staffing crisis.

Training

- ARQC staff and various Council members attended the St Louis County Health and Human Services Conference 10.12-10.14 2022 and 10.11-10.13 2023
- ARQC staff and several Council members attended the Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices 10.24/26 2023
- 8-1-23 ARQC staff went to The Salvation Army in Duluth to do a training for their staff on the Person-Centered Team Model and why PCP is important in organizations. They asked ARQC staff to come back and do another training for their staff on the PCP tool One Page Descriptions, scheduled for January 2024.
- ARQC Director and Coordinator completed Person-Centered Thinking training in Jan 2022.
- ARQC Director and Coordinator participated in Person-Centered Coaches training through Residential Services, Inc from Jan 2022-April 2022.
- ARQC Director completed the Star Services Supervisory, Management, and Leadership Series monthly throughout 2022.

Recommendations

- Person-Centered Thinking training is not readily accessible. Promote person-centered practices beyond traditional disability services:
 - Housing services and providers
 - Transportation workers
 - Family members,
 - And most importantly, people with disabilities.
- Provide Person-Centered Thinking training that is culturally aware and it should as often as possible be conducted by members of the same culture.
- Enhance education and leadership opportunities for people with disabilities. This can be done by providing local and regional support to Self-Advocacy groups.
- Expand Culture of Safety into more counties across Minnesota by gathering data and mapping critical incidents.



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- Rural communities feel disconnected and report little access to service options and information. Strategic efforts are needed to build and sustain relationships in these areas as well as to share information and resources.
- Efforts should be made to translate DHS and Disability Services documents into plain language. People with disabilities should be able to understand services and supports without extraordinary interpretation.

Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024

The ARQC will continue to work on several of the goals prioritized in the 2022-2023 workplan, as well as continue to expand its focus on developing projects that are informed by, and led by, people with disabilities. These projects and goals will fulfill the RQC task of monitoring and improving the quality of services, person-centered outcomes, and systems change within the Arrowhead Region. Below are the highlighted priorities for 2024.

- Build a Self-Advocate Leadership Initiative (SALI).
 - SALI will be an opportunity for self-advocate leaders in 2-3 cities in the Arrowhead to become trainers in positive-supports and learn about issues that affect their lives. The ARQC will work with the Institute on Community Integration and other local programs to bring speakers and trainers to in-person meetings.
- The Person-Centered Practices workgroup will continue to develop the Person-Centered Overview and will implement this overview to small providers, people with disabilities and their family members, housing and transportation workers, and other interested groups and individuals.
- Explore tenants' rights education for people with disabilities in the Duluth area by collaborating with HOME Line MN to host a VISTA ([Program Overview — MCN AmeriCorps VISTA Program \(mcnvista.org\)](https://mcnvista.org)) volunteer for 2024/2025. The ARQC will work together with Arc Northland to support this position if it is determined possible for this coming year.
- Collaborate with the Northeast Minnesota Person-Centered Community of Practice to expand person-centered practices and positive supports throughout the region. The ARQC staff will facilitate the bi-monthly meetings.



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Metro Regional Quality Council

Counties Served: Dakota, Hennepin and Scott
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Membership: Cassandra Tulp, State Rep Regional Resource Specialist Chelsea Lorenz, Dakota County Rep Christopher Elias, Advocate Frank Kadwell, Family Member Judi Marie Ringe, Family Member Lynn MacDonald, Advocate Melissa Hurt, Scott County Lead Agency Staff Mohamed Mourssi-Alfash, Community Member Robin Rohr, Hennepin County Rep Rod Carlson, Provider: Living Well Disability Services Sara Larson, Advocate

Quality Improvement Efforts

In January 2022 The Arc Minnesota signed a new contract with The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to continue the work of the Regional Quality Councils and a new work plan was developed. One of the deliverables outlined in the work plan was to identify issues and barriers that impede Minnesotans who have disabilities from optimizing choice of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and to create an action plan to address those barriers.

In August of 2022, the Metro Regional Quality Council (MRQC) collaborated with The Arc Minnesota to host a Charting the LifeCourse facilitation to identify regional priorities to address. Charting the LifeCourse is a tool that can be used to help organize ideas visions and goals as well as problem solve, navigate and advocate for supports.

The regional priorities identified in this facilitation process included barriers to:

The MRQC identified barriers and set priorities in the following two areas:

1. Housing
2. Employment



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In September 2022, the MRQC formed workgroups to address each priority. Each workgroup met at least once a month to make progress on their priorities.

Housing Workgroup

The Housing Workgroup started out as a small workgroup consisting of four MRQC member participants and the occasional guest participant. From November 2022 to January 2023, the workgroup held discussions on what kind of housing project they wanted to do. They concluded they wanted to do a project that brought greater awareness towards housing barriers especially for people with disabilities. In February 2023, they proposed creating and distributing informational pamphlets that would help bring this awareness. The pamphlets would include facts and statistics about housing barriers and offer suggestions of improvements.

In March 2023, the workgroup's focus shifted. One of the guest presenters who, was already well versed with previous MRQC projects, suggested the workgroup create videos instead of pamphlets. Videos would make a greater impact and would be more relatable and entertaining. By April 2023, the workgroup decided they would create short educational videos addressing various housing barriers. The objective of the videos was to bring increased awareness to housing barriers and encourage legislators to make needed changes.

Subsequent meetings were spent identify barriers, selecting which barriers to address, and deciding what layout to use to present information in the videos. During this time, the workgroup concluded the videos should involve advocates with lived experiences. Learning from disabled people with lived experience would make a greater impact than just presenting information and picture graphs. Over the following months, the workgroup contacted many advocates asking if they would appear in the videos talking about their housing experiences. They also contacted and asked experts who worked in housing or were knowledgeable about housing if they too would appear in the videos talking about housing resources and presenting information.

By June 2023, the workgroup managed to secure enough participants to expand the workgroup to average around twenty people throughout the entirety of the project. Having a large number of participants meant the workgroup could divide into subgroups. Each subgroup contained participants who had experience or expertise in one of the barriers the workgroup selected to address. The three barriers selected were:

1. Parent advocates struggling to find desirable and stable housing for their children with disabilities
2. Advocates with mobility disabilities struggling to find accessible and affordable housing
3. Advocates with varying disabilities struggling to find desirable, stable and affordable housing on their own.

The next couple of months were spent determining the layout, content, intended audience, and goal for each video. Each video follows a similar layout, which include:



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- Highlighting advocates with lived experiences to bring awareness to barriers
- Educating viewers about basic housing services, programs and resources
- Offering suggestions of change and improvement.

To describe in further detail, advocates would first explain their housing situation and discuss some of the barriers they faced, the actions they took and the resources they used to overcome some of their barriers. Next, they would share what they learned and offer words of advice to those who might be facing similar housing situations. Then, advocates and experts would present information and resources about various local and statewide housing services and programs. All information and resources presented in the videos will be posted onto a Housing Resources page on the Regional Quality council website. Viewers of the video will be able to access the resources by using a QR code at the end of each video that will bring them to RQC website resource page. Lastly, advocates and experts would share their thoughts about the current state of housing and offer suggestions for improvement.

In September 2023, the workgroup chose a videographer, Eve Daniels, to film and produce the videos, and filming date was set for October 3, 2023. A conference room at The Arc MN Saint Paul offices was chosen to be the location for the filming. It was an all-day event starting from 8am and ending at 7:30pm. Everybody who agreed to appear on film showed up. Additional people such as other workgroup participants, staff members and volunteers showed up to help. They helped set up, clean up, provide food and assist in filming. Overall, filming day was a success.

Following the filming of the videos, the videographer was tasked with editing what was captured into two or three 3-5 minute videos. The first video will be completed in December 2023, followed by the additional videos in January 2024.

The overall impact of the videos and website are yet to be realized since the project is not finished. The MRQC will continue working on them for the rest of this year and into next year. Many of the Housing Workgroup participants believe the videos will have a far-reaching impact. The participants felt strongly about educating the public about housing and informing legislators about the many housing barriers faced by people with disabilities, in particular the lack of available safe, suitable, accessible and affordable housing. We hope one impact the videos have is that more people become aware of the various housing options and resources available to them, especially if they or a loved one is in need of housing. Another impact we hope the videos have is to encourage more legislators to vote for needed improvements and changes within housing.

The MRQC would like to thank all of the participants who volunteered their time and resources to create these videos. Without them, these videos would not have evolved the way they did. Many participants in return have expressed appreciation towards the project and felt passionate about it.



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Employment Workgroup

The Employment Workgroup similar to the Housing Workgroup was small at first consisting on average of two MRQC members and three RQC staff; however, as the months passed participation grew as new members were recruited and new partnerships were built. Overall, the makeup of the workgroup consisted of MRQC members, RQC staff, professionals within employment services, and advocates. Similar to the Housing Workgroup, the Employment Workgroup wanted to do a project addressing barriers, specifically employment barriers for people with disabilities. They aimed to develop ideas for their project that would provide people relief from some of the barriers and increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities overall.

Between the months of October 2022 and March 2023, the workgroup determined they needed to first identify what employment barriers people with disabilities faced. To inform the project, staff and members of the workgroup wanted to learn directly from disabled people with lived experience. From April 2023 to August 2023, the workgroup collaborated with The Arc MN's Self-Advocacy Group and Peer Mentor Program and other advocacy organizations to connect with self-advocates. Initially, the workgroup planned to coordinate small focus groups of advocates who were either already employed or were in the process of seeing employment, to facilitate conversations regarding barriers. Coordinating these focus groups proved difficult to implement, so we shifted our focus to attending organizational advocacy meetings instead...meeting people where they already gather. Unfortunately, only a few organizations such as The Arc Minnesota and Rise ([Rise - Nonprofit 501\(c\)\(3\) Offering Human Services Programs](#)) granted requests to attend advocacy meetings. Although MRQC staff attended only a few advocacy meetings, a lot of information was obtained due to high meeting attendance and advocates' willingness to share information. The meetings were conducted using a hybrid method, including both in-person and online participants. Several agencies cited privacy, safety and logistical reasons for rejecting requests. In the coming months, the workgroup will use the information gathered from the advocacy meetings to formulate ideas that will offer people relief from the barriers they face.

One idea formulated was to create and offer employment resources and trainings based on what advocates shared. These resources would supplement already existing employment resources the MRQC created in past employment projects. The resources would cover an expansive array of topics relating to employment, such as how to navigate employment services, knowing my employment options, how income impacts my benefits, what are my legal rights as a disabled worker, and safe ways to ride public transport. The workgroup plans on creating a Employment Resources section on the RQC website, to upload employment resources as well as other employment related items that would be helpful to job seekers.

The MRQC also plans to gather and upload stories from disabled people who have successfully gained competitive employment that they enjoy. These stories will be shared to inform, educate and inspire other disabled job seekers of what to expect and how to prepare for their own employment journeys. The stories are intended to describe advocate employment experiences and recount life situations before and after obtaining their desired employment situation. They will also describe services, programs and resources used and any steps taken that aided in their employment journey. The stories will be provided through referrals the MRQC receive from other programs within The Arc MN who have



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expressed interest in participating in MRQC activities, specifically within housing and employment. The workgroup will contact other advocacy organizations to obtain a broader range of stories.

Lastly, in September 2023, the workgroup discussed coordinating a "Day in the Life" event. The goal of the event would be to bring increased awareness of employment needs for people with disabilities to legislators. They hope to schedule the event sometime early next year when the legislature is in session.

Many ideas the Employment Workgroup formulated were in response to the current state of employment programs and services. We believe many barriers stem from struggling to navigate and understand all the employment services and programs used by people with disabilities. One impact we hope our project will have is to provide relief for people with disabilities. As mentioned previously, we aim to make it easier for people with disabilities to navigate these systems and programs and in doing so reduce some of the barriers. The MRQC hopes the resources created will help with this. Another impact we hope to make is to spark greater support for policies that expand employment opportunities and quality of life for people with disabilities.

Outreach, Community Engagement and Training Efforts

The MRQC does most of its outreach through participating in local events. The list of events is below in the Community Engagement section. Being present at local events, whether they are held virtually or in person, brings increased awareness and visibility to The Arc Minnesota, the MRQC, and the MRQC quality improvement initiatives. It is always an underlying desire for the MRQC to increase its membership participation and to form collaborative partnerships with other organizations engaged in similar initiatives and goals as the MRQC. A few new MRQC members were recruited through the attending of events. Other new members were recruited by way of the RQC website or were referrals from other employees or programs at The Arc Minnesota. The MRQC also invited many guest volunteers to participate in MRQC meetings and projects. These volunteers make a large contribution to MRQC projects and initiatives and are encouraged to apply to become MRQC members.

Outreach and Community Engagement

The MRQC staff participated in a number of events last year and this year both virtually and in person. The methods of participation varied depending on the nature of the event. Sometimes the MRQC would host a booth where staff members would educate the public broadly about The Arc MN and the MRQC. Other times the MRQC gave presentations on specific topics or contributed ideas to group projects.

The events the MRQC participated in include:

- Pride Festival 2022 and 2023
Dates: 06/26/22 & 06/24/23
- Celebration of Non-Profits
Dates: 12/15/23
- MICAH's "Homes for All: Virtual Legislative Policy Breakfast"
Dates: 03/10/23 & 10/24/23
- Cowchella Music and Literature Festival



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Dates: 08/03/23

- Dreaming Disability Justice

Dates: 06/24/23 to 08/17/23

- The Gathering

Dates: 10/24/23 & 10/26/23

- Olmstead Workforce Shortage & People with Disabilities Workgroup

Dates: 10/11/22 to 04/11/23

Trainings

The Arc Minnesota encourages their employees to take advantage of training opportunities whenever possible to further their employee's personal and professional development so as to gain more knowledge, stay updated on disability related topics, so that staff can better serve all people.

The following are some trainings the MRQC staff participated in:

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice

The Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice Training occurs once a month and gives employees opportunities to learn more about various disability and equity related topics such as; Intersectionality, Ableism, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication. To illustrate further, the training about Ableism explained how society is built for able-bodied individuals. Society often times ignores the existence and needs of people with disabilities. People with disabilities are left out of society due to physical and attitudinal barriers. The recent shift in society's desire to become more inclusive has somehow missed the mark when including people with disabilities. In further reading about Ableism, it is commonly noted that people with disabilities continue to be overlooked and excluded from community conversations and actions that directly affect them. The quote, "Nothing about us without us" has become a mantra within the disabled community, and is very fitting to describing how things should be.

Culture of Safety Training (02/15/23 & 02/17/23)

This two-day in-person training event involved mostly human service workers and providers. Participants gained a better understanding about the Culture of Safety's beginnings and its goal for improving systems of delivery. The Culture of Safety mindset is to give workers the benefit of the doubt and assume workers' intentions are not to inflict or cause harm but additional and sometimes unforeseeable factors are at play, which can lead to an incident. It is beneficial for the MRQC to be knowledgeable about the Culture of Safety basics so they can offer recommendations and suggestions that align with the mindset.

Somali Language & Culture Sessions Intro and Advanced (11/29/22- 01/31/23)

The course offered a basic introduction to Somali language, history, culture and religion. It taught participants a few common conversational words and phrases, and explained some well observed cultural and religious practices. The instructor was from Somalia originally and it was interesting to learn how she ended up settling in Minnesota.



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Recommendations

As a result of implementing Quality Improvement Projects, the MRQC came up with recommendations for both the Housing Workgroup and the Employment Workgroup.

The Housing Workgroup's first recommendations would be to increase awareness of the housing barriers faced by people with disabilities. This could be accomplished through awareness campaigns driven by advocates and organizations, including informational videos similar to the ones the Housing Workgroup produced. If more people become informed about housing barriers, there would be greater support for needed system changes.

A second recommendation would be for people to support policies that provide more funding for the building and upkeep of accessible and affordable housing. According to the advocates from the workgroup (and the this article: [Homelessness Among Individuals with Disabilities: Influential Factors and Scalable Solutions - NACCHO](#)), many people with disabilities are at higher risk of being homeless or being put into more restrictive housing situations due to low income and lack of accessible housing...especially wheelchair accessible housing. As a consequence, people's housing security, physical conditions, mental health and overall quality of life diminish. Julia Page, Public Policy Director, published an article that encourages supporting policies that "ensures that housing built with state dollars through Housing Infrastructure Bonds works for everyone. It would create a shared definition of housing accessibility which includes both physical and sensory accessibility features to provide clarity for developers and builders" ([Advocating Policy Changes for Affordable and Accessible Housing | Minnesota Council On Disability \(state.mn.us\)](#)). In addition, a constitutional amendment that the MRQC recommends learning about and supporting is Our Future Starts at Home. According to their website, <https://ourhomesmn.org/>, Our Future Starts at Home is a "broad coalition of advocates, community and faith leaders, and housing champions who affirm that housing is the foundations to which our lives are built." They propose in this amendment to create a sales tax of 3/8 of 1%. The money collected from the tax would be used to fund many initiatives. One of the initiatives is to provide stable funding towards housing regardless of what political party is in power. Another one is to allocate funds to increase accessible housing.

The Employment Workgroup's first recommendation would be to increase awareness about current employment services and opportunities for people with disabilities through public awareness campaigns. If there is increased awareness, perhaps more people would support policies that expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities. To explain further, workers with disabilities are less likely to be competitively employed, and more likely to be paid subminimum wages compared to nondisabled workers.

The workgroup's second recommendation would be to discontinue the practice of paying workers with disabilities subminimum wage. According to the information offered by the Taskforce on Eliminating Subminimum Wage (<https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/news-initiatives-reports-workgroups/long-term-services-and-supports/task-force-on-eliminating-subminimum-wages/faq.jsp>),



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subminimum wage "violates the civil rights of people with disabilities and prevents them from realizing their full potential." The workgroup recommends supporting legislation that eliminates subminimum wage (for example, the proposed 2023 bill, SF2669/HE2513, <https://www.disability.state.mn.us/about-our-public-policy/public-policy-letters/sf-2669-hf-2513-eliminating-subminimum-wage/>). Although this piece of legislation did not pass in the last legislative session, it is still noteworthy and is something to continue striving for.

Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024

The MRQC will continue with their Quality Improvement Projects and other priorities. Once the Housing Workgroup's housing videos are finished and ready for viewing, the workgroup will start distributing the videos to the intended audiences. The intended audience vary greatly and include:

- People in need of housing
- Advocates helping with housing
- Housing service providers
- Property builders
- Legislators.

The workgroup wants to distribute their videos as broadly as possible so they reach a large audience. The workgroup's hope is by reaching a large audience, the intended impact of the videos will be realized. In addition to distributing the videos, the Housing Workgroup will continue working and improving their Housing Resources website. The website will include all the resources presented in the videos and will also include additional resources that were not included in the videos. The resources will cover a wide range of programs and services such as finding and paying for housing, and obtaining Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Services and Independent Living Services (ILS) that help people maintain and stay in their housing. The workgroup will continue to post resources as they gather them so the website can expand with time.

The Employment Workgroup will continue to make progress on their projects. We are in the middle of organizing employment resources that we will continue to share on the RQC website. We hope these resources will make navigating employment easier. In addition to offering resources, the workgroup would like to offer trainings or informational sessions to the public related to employment. To achieve this, guest speakers would be asked to present on various employment topics and the public would be invited to attend so they can become more informed. Lastly, the Employment Workgroup plans to collaborate with The Arc Minnesota and others to coordinate a "Day in the Life" event scheduled in early 2024. Our plan is to create opportunities for legislators to witness the various struggles people with disabilities go through on a daily basis. Advocates with lived experiences would demonstrate and describe their struggles so legislators gain firsthand knowledge of what life is like for people with disabilities. Through this event, the MRQC will encourage legislators to support legislation that improves and increases employment opportunities for people with disabilities.



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Region 10 Quality Council

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Quality Improvement Efforts

In January 2022 The Arc Minnesota signed a new contract with The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) to continue the work of the Regional Quality Councils and a new work plan was developed. One of the deliverables outlined in the work plan was to identify issues and barriers that impede Minnesotans who have disabilities from optimizing choice of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) and to create an action plan to address those barriers.

In August of 2022, the Region 10 Regional Quality Council collaborated with The Arc Minnesota to host a Charting the LifeCourse facilitation to identify regional priorities to address. Charting the LifeCourse is a tool that can be used to help organize ideas visions and goals as well as problem solve, navigate and advocate for supports.

The regional priorities identified in this facilitation process included barriers to:

1. Transportation
2. Accessible and Affordable Housing

In September 2022 the Region 10 RQC formed workgroups to address each priority. Each workgroup meets at least once a month to make progress on their priorities.

Housing Workgroup

The housing workgroup formed to explore and collaborate with local partners to establish Quality Improvement Plans to address the lack of Accessible and affordable Housing in Southeast Minnesota. Some the activities that the Region 10 RQC has been working on include:



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- Housing Tenant Advocacy
- Awareness, Education, and Resources for Disabled People and Apartment Managers
- Advocacy around stronger anti-discrimination laws and Stronger enforcement of anti-discrimination laws (with a special interest in disability)
- Explore COPA/TOPA -- Tenant and Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA or COPA) policies are being proposed around the country, with potentially substantial impacts on housing affordability, community stability and power, and tenant quality of life. These policies give tenants or their representatives (in the case of TOPA) or nonprofits (in the case of COPA) the first chance to buy their buildings when the owner decides to sell, and the opportunity to match a third-party offer. Despite the newness of many policy proposals, TOPA has a 40-year history of being implemented in Washington, D.C., in ways that have contributed to affordability and community stability in one of the fastest-gentrifying cities in the country.
- Organize an Accessibility Walk

Transportation Workgroup

The Transportation Workgroup formed to address lack of accessible, reliable, and cost effective transportation in Southeast Minnesota.

RQC Staff and members of the Transportation Workgroup spent time building partnerships and exploring opportunities for improvement as well as what is working well with transportation in the State Minnesota. For example:

- Transportation Workgroup members traveled to St Cloud to learn more about their Metro Bus Mobility Training ([Travel Training | Metro Bus \(ridemetrobus.com\)](#)).
- The Workgroup partnered with Erickson Schafer, Transit Operations Manager for the city of Rochester to improve accessibility in the paratransit application process
- In our exploration of transportation needs, the workgroup learned that Southeast Minnesota is the only Region that does not support a Regional Transportation Coordination Council (RTCC) to address Transportation needs and improve transportation access ([Regional Transportation Coordinating Organizations | Minnesota Council on Transportation Access \(coordinatemntransit.org\)](#))
 - We learned that Southeast Minnesota began the process of forming and RTCC in 2017, but never moved past phase 1, and we wanted to learn more about this. Data collected and initial planning work from 2017 can be found here: [2017 Region 10 Local Human Service Transit Coordination Plan \(coordinatemntransit.org\)](#)
 - We collaborated with Tom Gottfried, Executive Director of Office of Transit and Active Transportation from MN-DOT, to explore the impact developing a RTCC may have on our communities, and what it would take to do so.
 - The workgroup will continue to explore this opportunity into 2024

Outreach, Community Engagement and Training Efforts

The Region 10 Quality Council staff organized and participated in several Outreach, Community Engagement, and Training activities including:



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- **Family Fun Day:** Kerri Leucuta partnered with self-advocates and allies to participate in Autism Resource Guide's Family Fun Day on May 20, 2023. Family Fun Day was a FREE sensory friendly event enjoyed by 200+ families
- **Rochester Pride:** Former Region 10 Quality Council Coordinator attended and networked at the May 20, 2023 Rochester Pride Event. Rochester Pride is a family friendly event celebrating Rochester's LGBTQIA+ community.
- **Walk Around the World:** June 10, 2023, former Region 10 Regional Quality Council Coordinator, Zoey Immygen, participated in the IMAA's 2023 Walk around the World, and annual event celebrating World Refugee Day and diverse cultures in Southeast Minnesota
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) Trainings:** The RQC and The Arc Minnesota staff attend monthly DEIJ Trainings focused a wide host of DEIJ topics, including the intersectionality of disability justice with racial, LGBTQIA+, and other groups, plain language, and other related topics.
- **Culture of Safety Orientation:** Elijah Gray participated in Culture of Safety Orientation on 9/7/2023 to build an understanding of what Culture of Safety is and how it relates to disability advocacy. At this training, he learned about safety science principles, old and new views about safety, how Minnesota uses the incident review model to improve the disability services system, and why and how to take part in incident reviews.
- **The Arc Minnesota Day of Learning:** On 9/23/23, Elijah Gray and Kerri Leucuta attended The Arc Minnesota Day of Learning, a day of workshops, community projects, and booths featuring disabled "makers" from across the state. The day's theme was "Disability Justice, Joy, and the Journey Forward". At the workshops, Elijah learned directly from people with lived experience and attended sessions pertaining to the 10 Principles of Disability Justice, LGBTQIA+ and Disability Identity, a book reading and author discussion, and other sessions.
- **Community Action Group Supporting People with Disabilities:** Elijah Gray attended meetings and participated in events supported by the Community Action Group Supporting People with Disabilities, a local volunteer organization started by RQC member Judy Young. As part of their work, the RQC helped plan and organize local public listening sessions. The goal of those sessions was to discuss and identify local priorities around disability advocacy. At the 9/30/23 forum, they identified the following issues as priorities as well as made recommendations on solutions:
 - **Issue: Direct Support Professional (DSP) work force shortage and quality of DSPs**
 - **Solution:** Minnesota should require a tiered direct support professional certification with additional pay as incentive. As people learn more, train more, and take on additional responsibility...compensate them more.
 - **Issue: Medical Assistance inequity.** Explanation: As of right now **people without disabilities** can have 133% of the federal poverty line of income from any sources

(work, investments, alimony, etc.) and qualify for Medical assistance. There is also no asset limit. **People with disabilities** who do not work can only have 100% of the Federal poverty line to qualify for MA, if they go over, they have a spend down. Also, they have an asset limit.

- **Solution:** Minnesota/federal government legislation should allow people with disabilities to have the same rights as people without disabilities.
- **Issue: Birth to Age 22 Special Education need more qualified people teaching special education and staying in special education**
 - **Solutions:**
 1. Share some of the responsibility to general education teachers to promote full inclusion.
 2. Streamline plans to be able to decrease the amount of paperwork.
 3. Increase parental rights.
- **Issue: Minnesota Adult Abuse Reporting Center (MAARC) lack of or delay of investigation and/or reporting of abuse or maltreatment**
 - **Solution:** Audit of MAARC: number of reports, timely responses, timely explanation of result and follow-up.
- **Issue: MAEPD premiums hinders those who wish to work**
 - **Solution:** Remove MAEPD premiums to ensure people can access healthcare when they begin working without worrying about paying high premiums.
- **United Way Annual Meeting:** On October 3rd, 2023, Elijah Gray attended the United Way of Olmsted County's Annual Meeting. This meeting was an event where attendees heard presentation from [Destination Medical Center](#), Rochester Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Kent Petel, and Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan. Additionally, there was time for networking where contacts were created with the Mayo Clinic.
- **Minnesota Gathering:** Region 10 Quality Council Staff Elijah Gray, Marta Milliken, and Kerri Leucuta served on the planning committee for [The Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices](#) in partnership with the [Institute on Community Integration](#). The Gathering took place over two days, an in-person day on 10/24/2023 and an online day on 10/26/2023. In preparation for the day, RQC staff helped manage facilities/resources, book presenters, recruit participants, and plan Marketplace Learning sessions.
- **Transportation Work Group Presentation:** At The Gathering, the Transportation Work Group hosted a presentation to share our perspectives on transportation issues facing the disability community as well as solutions we are exploring. This presentation included insights from representatives from Rochester Transit and MNDOT.
- **Town Hall Forum with [The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance](#):** RQC staff Elijah Gray, Marta Milliken, and Kerri Leucuta in addition to RQC member Beth Honecker partnered with The Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance to host a Town Hall Forum on 11/2/2023.



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- **International Day of Persons With Disabilities:** As part of the [MaxAbility Taskforce](#), Elijah Gray and Kerri Leceuta served on the planning committee for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 12/4/2023. Specifically, they worked closely with the event venue staff to coordinate catering and facility needs for the event.
- **New Membership and New Organizations Connected with the Quality Council:**
- The Region 10 Quality Council welcomed new members to join the Council or simply attend the Council or Workgroup meetings. These people include:
 - Rebekah Gish, a medical professional in Rochester who also has a young child with disabilities. She formally joined the Council as a member in October of 2023
 - [Jacob Metz, a Bloomberg Harvard City Fellow](#) working on diversity and accessibility-related projects for the City of Rochester
 - Erickson Schafer, Transit Operations Planner for the City of Rochester
 - Tom Gottfried, Executive Director of the Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)
 - Marvin Langanki, a person with a visual disability, joined the Transportation Workgroup to share his lived experience with public transit

Recommendations

Transportation Workgroup Recommendations

Transportation continues to be a challenge facing many people with disabilities, especially in rural areas. Many citizens in rural areas of Minnesota simply don't have access to public transportation due to their location.

- The Workgroup has explored the formation of a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council (RTCC) in southeast Minnesota as a potential way to meet the transportation needs of people with disabilities in the region.
- In addition to the exploration of an RTCC formation, the Workgroup has also heard from [SE MN Together](#), a community organization that has a Transit Management Organization (TMO). The Workgroup has explored that as another potential model to approach transportation needs.
- Current transit provider policies create challenges for people with disabilities, especially in regards to picking up riders and ride cancellations. Some community members have communicated that riders are asked to wait for long periods of time for drivers while drivers need only wait for a brief time period for riders. Also, the Workgroup has heard from community members who have reported their drivers never showing up for scheduled rides, providers not following internal policies and expectations, and riders being denied rides.



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Accessible and Affordable Housing Workgroup Recommendations:

- Currently, there is inconsistency across the region on what "accessible" housing is, especially rental properties. A recommendation from this Workgroup is to create ways for homeowners, property managers, and landlords to be consistent with accessible housing.
- Statutes, including housing-related statutes, are difficult to understand for many, including people with disabilities. The Workgroup recommends creating [plain language](#) versions of the statutes to improve equity and prevent housing discrimination.
- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act, Community Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA, COPA): the Workgroup has explored TOPA/COPA as a potential method to combat housing discrimination against the disability community.
- Tenant and Housing Rights Resources: The Workgroup has explored creating consistent, plain language resources for people with disabilities to help them better understand their rights and the legal requirements of landlords. Additionally, the Workgroup has explored creating resources for landlords about how to best be equitable and accessible when renting/leasing to people with disabilities. Also, resources raising awareness about the benefits of renting/leasing to people with disabilities have been explored as being beneficial.

Priorities for 2024:

- Transportation and Housing continue to be important and impactful topics in our region, so those will continue to be priorities as we move into 2024.
- Another priority the Council has identified is community engagement. The Council found great success with public forums and listening sessions in 2023, and the Council has decided to continue and expand that work in 2024. The following public engagement methods and opportunities will be explored in 2024:
 - Townhall Forums for community members and people with disabilities to engage with elected officials
 - Listening Sessions for community members, particularly those not already involved in the disability space, to learn more about the lives of self-advocates in our region.
 - Candidate Forums: With 2024 being an election year, structured public events for community members and people with disabilities to interact with candidates for elected office could prove an effective way to advocate for disability justice.
 - Livestreamed events: In the pursuit for equitable and accessible community conversations, a priority of making events available for virtual attendance has been made.
 - Radio/Television advertisements for public events
 - The Council has created a team with the explicit goal of putting on high quality public events consistently



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West Central Regional Quality Council

Counties Served: Clay, Grant, Otter Tail, Polk, & Pope	
Regional Council Staff: Donna Atherton, Coordinator Katie Cragg, Associate	
Address: Moorhead	
Phone: 218-233-0853	
Email: donnaatherton@arcminnesota.org katiecragg@arcminnesota.org	
Council Members	
Self - Advocates	Family Members
David Burrous	Jackie Beedy
Jason Melby	Calley Rosado
Lukas Senn	Jen Troska
	Sherri Wahl
County/State Representatives	
Hollie Wanner (Clay)	Melanie Courier (Otter Tail)
Phyllis Reller (Western Prairies – Grant & Pope)	Laurie Sanders (Otter Tail)
Marni Kelly (Polk)	Chad Erdmann (DHS)
Jeff Bjornson (Vocational Rehabilitation)	Celeste Weber (Vocational Rehabilitation)
Providers	
Shannon Bock – Creative Care For Reaching Independence	Christine Schulz - Connections
Mike Nelson - LSS	Bill Smith – Access of the RR Valley
Community Members	
Angela Doll - Educator	Michele Mogen –Former Educator
Molly McKinnon- Educator	Janna Peterson – MN Disability Law Center
Meeting minutes can be found at https://www.qualitycouncilmn.org/west-central/west-central-meeting-minutes/	

Quality Improvement Efforts

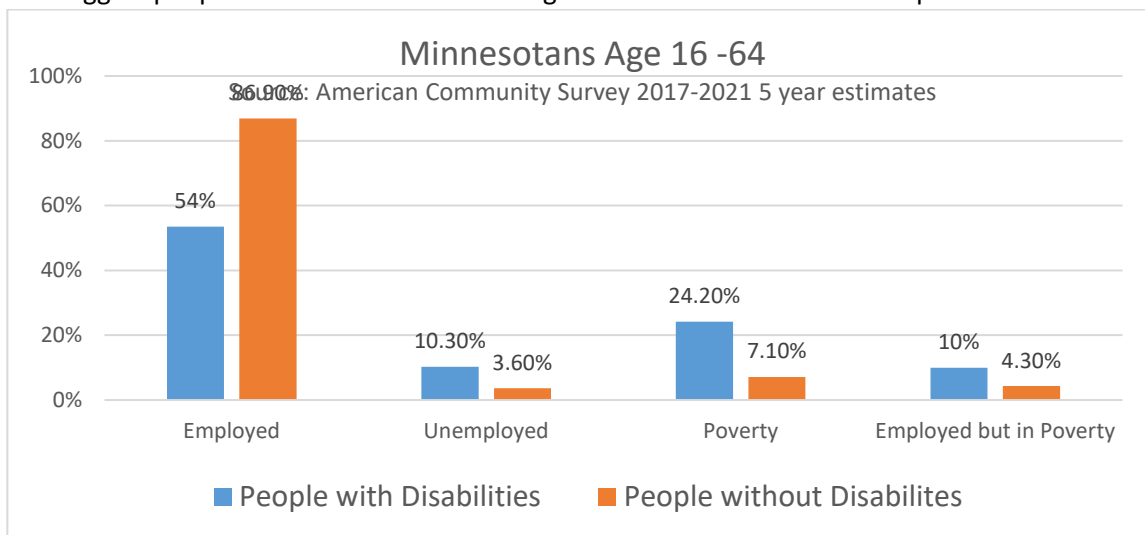
The West Central Quality Council started the process by exploring the issues that council members found most important to themselves, family members, or people they serve. The Coordinator had a conversation to each council member as they joined the council. After themes emerged, the West Central Quality Council engaged in a facilitation process to brainstorm and determine regional needs and priorities. Process notes – [11/17/23](#) & [Work Plan](#). This resulted in two top priorities:

1. Employment
2. Transition to Adulthood

Employment

The American Community Survey for 2017 to 2021 (5-year estimates) documents the labor force experience of Minnesotans with disabilities. Minnesotans with disabilities age 16 and older make up about 12.9% of the total population but only 5.8% of the employed population. The annual unemployment rate for prime working age Minnesotans living with a disability was 10.3%. This is almost 3 times that of the general population, which was 3.6%.

In 2021, 54% of Minnesota people with any disability age 16-64 were employed. The percentage of people without disabilities employed was 86.9%. With the potential to eliminate subminimum wage, more people are looking for work outside of sheltered workshops. Employers are looking for people to work. We suggest people with disabilities are willing and able to fill some of those positions.



People with disabilities face many obstacles to working. Significant barriers include

- Finding suitable work
- Convincing employers of their value as employees
- Inaccessible hiring processes
- Transportation
- Accommodations needed to perform their jobs
 - personal care assistance
 - job coaches
 - accessibility software and hardware
 - accessible facilities (citation

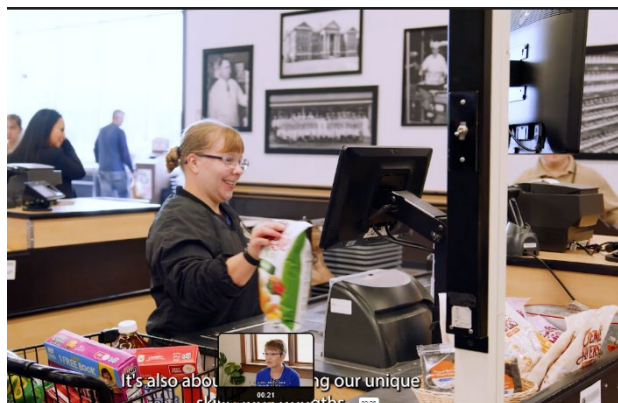
<https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/publications/trends/september-2023/disability.jsp>

Unemployment and wages that are less than minimum wage leads to higher poverty levels for people with disabilities than those without disabilities. The ability to find employment and have economic stability is an important quality of life indicator for Minnesotans with disabilities. (citation

<https://mn.gov/deed/newscenter/publications/trends/september-2023/disability.jsp>)

The West Central Council chose to provide information on the experiences of employers who have hired people with disabilities. WCRQC made [12 short videos](#). The videos included people with disabilities and employers. Topics:

- 2- Disability Employment Awareness overview (one formatted for streaming CTV)
- Combination of videos
- 4 Employer Testimonials
- Tips For Inclusion
- Facts vs Fiction
- 2 Segregated Employment and Sub-Minimum wage (one formatted for streaming CTV)
- Future Vision
- The videos are on the [West Central RQC Employment Workgroup](#) website page and social media .
- [The Arc Minnesota YouTube channel](#) (81 views and 2,557 impressions as of 11/14/23)
- The Arc Minnesota Facebook page – reach - 185, total minutes viewed – 43
- The RQC Facebook page - Post reach - 23
- CTV, which will generate 35,000 impressions
- LinkedIn - specifically aimed at HR professionals



Statistics for the WCRQC webpage.

Oct. 1-Nov. 20	Views	Users	Views per user	Ave. engagement	clicks	File download
employment-work-group	558	294	1.90	1m	16	52

WCRQC made infographics on Reasonable Accommodations. There are also other resources included on the website page. At this point, the resources are information for employers and the general public. More resources that will focus on tools for employees are planned in collaboration with the Metro RQC.

The West Central Coordinator shared information on Disability Employment Awareness Month. This included sharing the videos and information at Fargo Kiwanis and Moorhead Vikingland Kiwanis, and posts on the RQC Facebook page. Presentations highlighted the value of people with disabilities in the workforce, inclusion, accommodations, and the importance of earning at least minimum wage.

Transition to Adulthood

WCRQC got feedback from the Council, Facebook groups, a Parent Support group, and 3 surveys for parents and teachers to inform our Transition to Adulthood workgroup.

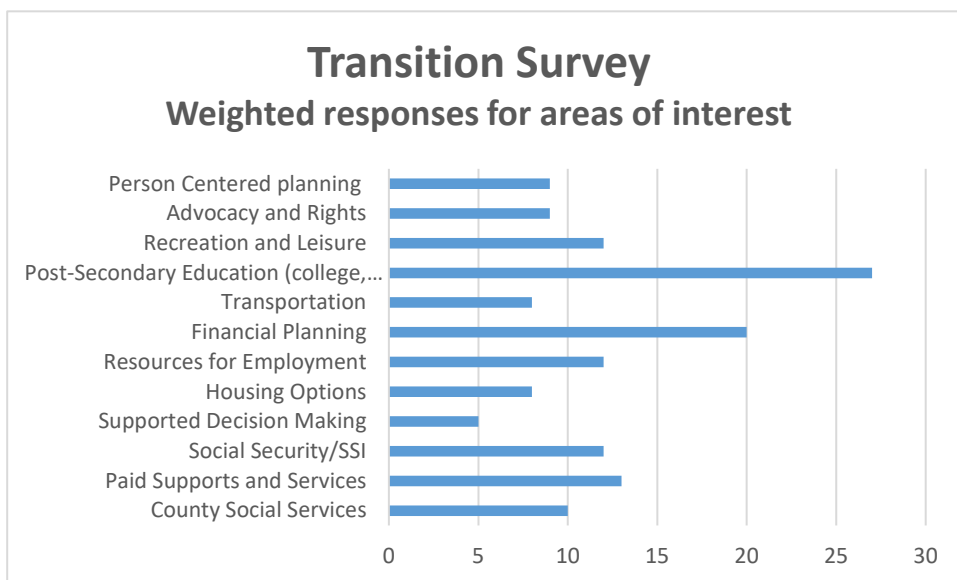
- Transition areas/Guardianship/Supported Decision Making and Conservatorship
 - Surveys

1. Guardianship/Supported Decision Making – 12 responses

- The survey provided guidance for the information WCRQ presented for Supported Decision making training held November 14th.
- **Rethinking Guardianship for Transition Age Young Adults with Disabilities: The Promise of Supported Decision Making.** Presenter - Anita Raymond from Volunteers of America
 - 14 attendees included parents, case managers, a teacher, and advocates.

2. Transition areas– 28 responses

- People listed their top three priorities. We use these priorities to plan projects.
- Weighted as follows:
 - 1=3 point
 - 2=2 points
 - 3=1 point



3. Parents whose child already went through transition– 6 responses. Will need to revisit this to get more information to move forward. Our hope was to learn which transition areas were the most challenging and how they learned about them.

- Parents of children with a disability need some guidance to navigate the transition years. Our research indicates parents often look to teachers or social workers, who often do not know the steps or resources that can help them. WCRQC developed a [Transition Check list & Resources](#)
 - Comprehensive list of what things a student with disabilities should be doing based on grade and age to help the transition process



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- Posted on RQC Facebook page – post reach – 32
- Website statistics as of 11/14/23

Oct. 1-Nov. 14	Views	Users	Views per user	Clicks	File downloads
transition-work-group/	142	58	2.46	28	17

- WCRQC also made Transition binders and sent them to schools in the region as hardcopy samples. The material is available digitally on [website](#):
 - Transition [Checklist](#)
 - One Page Profile - captures important information about a person on a single sheet of paper
 - what people appreciate about me
 - what's important to me
 - Resources
- WCRQC staff is partnering with MN Disability Law Center & MDE SpEd Forms to change wording on IEP to clarify Guardianship is not the only option for participation when the school presents information on Transfer of Rights

Outreach, Community Engagement and Training Efforts

The West Central Quality Council staff organized and participated in several Outreach, Community Engagement, and Training activities including:

- Monthly meetings with Community Leader Employment Task Force – a group of non-profit leaders that focuses on POC
- Recruited people from various stakeholder groups to start the new West Central Council
- Expanded Council to include more diversity
- Posting and sharing information on RQC Facebook page
- Edited RQC newsletter to let people know about things happening with each Council
- Participate in Capitol Connectors group & recruit new members
- Participate in The Arc Minnesota Public Policy workgroup
- Prepared remarks for Rep. Fischbach about Community Living May 2023
- Helped plan and moderated candidate Forum 9/27/23
- Bi-monthly Clay County Community Transition Interagency Committee
- Collaborate with Self-Advocate team to find and share information for monthly topics on such things as safety, human rights, bullying, and disability history
- Help change The Arc Minnesota Positions Statements and other documents into Plain Language, so more people can understand them
- Participated in ARRMS Day at capitol 3-28-23
- Booth at Juneteenth events – 6/17 & 6/19 2023
- Attended Diversity Job Fair – 6/27/23
- Participated in a MNDOT discussion representing transportation needs of people with disabilities – 6/30/23, 9/14/23
- Presentation to the Moorhead Human Rights Commission 7/19/23



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- Booth at Pride event– 9/12/23
- Perham Area Support Group 9/19/23
- Table at Moorhead High School Transition Fair – 10/30/23
- Moorhead Vikingland Kiwanis Disability Employment presentation – 10/25/23
- The Gathering on Person Centered Planning – 10/26/23
- Fargo Kiwanis Disability Employment Presentation – 10/31/23
- Organized Supported Decision Making training – 11/14/23
- E1MN CTIC Leadership 11/15/23
- Table at Rest & Rejuv- for moms of child with disabilities – 11/18/23

Trainings/Workshops

- Staff attends monthly DEIJ trainings
- Attended trainings on Charting the LifeCourse, Disability Hub My Vault
- Attended a National Council on Disability Roundtable: Strengthening the Home- and Community-based Ecosystem
- Attended Equal Pay for People with Disabilities: MDLC's Report on Ending Subminimum Wage 1/27/23
- Attended Listening Session on Positive Supports -1/31/23
- Attended Community Input Event on Workforce Shortage and People with Disabilities. 2/7/23
- Attended Easy Career-Readiness Techniques for Transition-Aged Students -03/1/23
- Attended What Every Guardian Should Know About Supported Decision Making and Other Less Restrictive alternatives – presented by MN Courts – 3/9/23
- Assistive Technology with STAR – 3/22/23
- Life of One's Own Webinar Series - 4/5/23, 4/19/23
- Attended Assistive Technology Enables Inclusion by First Ensuring Participation 4/5/23
- Attended Accommodation Solutions for Neurodivergent Workers 4/13/23
- Attended Expect, Engage, and Empower: Successful Transitions for All – (The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services) 5/10/23
- Attended Accessing County Service for Children with Down syndrome webinar 6/27/23
- Charting the Life training– 5/21/23
- Odyssey -Workforce Shortage - Data and Current Trends – 5/23/23
- Attended Disability Employment webinar on AI Work tools -7/11/23
- Odyssey Major Change Initiatives 8/22/23
- Culture of Safety Training - staff & 6 council members - 9/7/23
 - 1 council member attended 2 day training - 8/29 & 8/30
- Person Centered Care training 9/13/23
- Staff attended Customized employment training 10/4/23



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Recommendations

- School districts across Minnesota are not consistent with their programing for transition. This makes inequitable opportunities for students. MDE could provide guidance.
- Recommend MDE guidance/Q & A to explain the options for parent to participate in Individualized Education Program meeting upon Transfer of Rights
- There are efforts through many entities, including E1MN and Disability Hub to help people understand steps for transition. Disability Hub has great resources, but many parents are not aware of this. Explore more ways to get information out.
 - Community Transition Interagency Committees (CTIC) could be one avenue, but many counties that do not have a CTIC.
 - School districts and partners could train and utilize parent mentors/navigators
 - Teacher development
- Continually raise awareness of the value of people with disabilities in the workplace. Work to eliminate Subminimum wage.
- Continue to fund Innovation Grants to help people with disabilities achieve their personal employment and inclusive housing goals
- Increase awareness of [Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund](#) and any other funds to help employers include workers with disabilities
- Develop more ways to encourage hiring people with disabilities
- Increase transportation options, especially in more rural areas

Priorities for 2024

Current WCRQC workgroups still have goals that could continue in 2024. The Council will look at the goals to determine if the council will keep working on Employment and Transition to Adulthood for a period of time or work on other goals.

Employment Plans for next year:

- Screening and discussion of the documentary Hearts of Glass.
 - This highlights integrated employment of people with disabilities and innovative business.
 - WCRQC will partner with college business, social work, and other departments that have students that could further the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce. Other interested people will also attend.
- Reverse Job Fair.
 - Employers visit people with disabilities
 - People with disabilities use various ways to show their strengths and interests
 - Collaborate with agencies, high school transition students, and other people with disabilities



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Transition Plans for next year:

- Mental health practitioner to provide tools for students with disabilities that are not able to do some of the things their peers are doing (ie. Driving, inclusion in the community...)
- Technology for living and working independently



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Acknowledgements and Gratitude

This report was compiled by a collaboration of Regional Quality Council Managers, Coordinators, and Associates. Their passion, thoughtfulness, hard work, and dedication to improving the lives of people with disabilities is very much needed and appreciated.

The Regional Quality Councils would also like to extend a thank you to all the council members, volunteers and partners for their time, expertise, and insight into the work we do.

And last, but not least, we would like to thank The Arc Minnesota, the Arc Northland, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and Minnesota State Legislators for believing in and supporting the good work that the Regional Quality Councils accomplish.