

# REGIONAL QUALITY COUNCIL (RQC) NEWSLETTER



ISSUE 2 | JANUARY 2024



Regional Quality Council staff

## Regional Capacity Building

On January 1st, The Arc Minnesota Regional Quality Councils (RQC) added Regional Capacity Building (RCB) to the workplan. The purpose is to support Person-Centered Practices and Positive Behavioral Supports. We will partner with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration (ICI)

### Staff

- Regional Capacity Building Manager: Cortney Kressin  
Cortney transitioned from another position at The Arc Minnesota into this role.
- Kerri Leucuta, Regional Quality Council (RQC) manager
- RQC associates in the Metro, Region 10, & West Central

An overview of our tasks

- Form RCB teams to develop recommendations for systems transformation and change
- Explore RCB efforts in the Metro and West Central Regions
- Implement a process for interviewing people served to learn about:
  - Their perspective on quality in the HCBS system
  - Changes that could be made to improve their experience with the disability service system
    - Develop recommendations to improve quality
- Create accessible information, tools, and resources:
  - Person-centered practices
  - Self-direction in disability services
  - Individual rights and advocacy for people accessing services in the HCBS system

The Arrowhead RQC Capacity Building information can be found in the ARQC section of this newsletter.

## Statewide News

### Happy New Year!

The Regional Quality Councils have signed a new contract for 2024 and are excited to continue the quality improvement projects started in 2023! Each Regional Quality Council will continue with priorities identified in 2023.

Please read below about the great work each of the four regional quality councils are doing!

### The Workforce Shortage Workgroup

We will continue to work to address the direct care workforce shortage in Minnesota by engaging and educating legislators about the impact the workforce shortage is having on people with disabilities.

We plan to provide legislators with information and resources that will help in making informed decisions when passing bills and approving funding.

### Culture of Safety

Region 10 and Metro RQCs made recommendations to the Department of Human Services (DHS)

- Guidance to support technology and service planning
- Consider reducing or consolidating required paperwork in support planning meetings determination.

continued on page 6

# REGIONAL COUNCILS

## Arrowhead (ARQC)



### Staff

- Program Director Becky Lambert
- Program Coordinator Beth Johnson

The Arrowhead Regional Quality Council (ARQC) completed its rebuilding year and is back to doing what we do best

- monitor and improve the quality of services for folks with disabilities
- promote person-centered practices
- increase opportunities for self-advocate leadership

The Council is going strong with 17 members from four counties representing self-advocates, parents, service providers, and lead agencies.

The ARQC continues to be involved with

- Capitol Connectors
- Rev Up Minnesota
- Duluth Affordable Housing Coalition
- Other commissions and rights groups

Please reach out if you are interested in learning more about the ARQC. We are looking forward to an amazing 2024!

ARQC received a grant from the Institute on Community Integration (ICI) In 2023 to develop plain language documents on person-centered and positive support practices. We got feedback and active involvement from groups of self-advocates. These groups met regularly for 6 months with program coordinator Beth Johnson to review existing definitions, documents, examples, and PC plans and principles.

The group wrote a new, inclusive, plain language version of 4 Person-Centered Plans and an overview of Person-Centered Practices. We want this work to continue and expand to more topics. This could include information in infographics and short videos

The ARQC has worked to develop a person-centered overview for in-person mini-trainings. We will share this with anyone who is unable to attend a more formal Person-Centered Thinking training in 2024

- small service providers
- people with disabilities and their families
- housing and transportation workers

The Tenant Council quality improvement project has continued throughout 2023 with ARQC staff facilitating tenant council meetings and having meaningful conversations with management companies on how to work together.

### The Minnesota Gathering

2023 brought an interesting opportunity for the ARQC to help ICI plan and host the northern [MN Gathering for Person-Centered Practices](#) in Cloquet. This was the first year that the in-person event was held outside of the Metro. We embraced new ideas after the years of virtual conferences left us longing for renewed connection. The ARQC will again play a central role in planning the MN Gathering in 2024.

# REGIONAL COUNCILS

## Metro (MRQC)



### Staff

- Coordinator:  
JoAnn Leppink
- Associate:  
Sophie Iverson joined  
in the fall of 2023.  
Sophie worked in

multiple disability advocacy spaces; most recently as the public policy intern at the Minnesota Council on Disability and currently as an Options Counselor at the Disability Hub MN. She has a passion to advocate for individuals with disabilities. She enjoys serving as a resource and mentor to those in the community.

## Housing Workgroup

Goal: Increase awareness of housing barriers faced by people with disabilities and offer resources to help.

Current projects:

- Creating and distributing informational videos
  - highlight advocates with lived experiences and housing barriers
  - educate viewers about basic housing services, programs and resources
  - offer suggestions of change and improvements
- Building a Housing Resources website.  
Includes information on
  - paying for housing
  - tenant rights
  - personal stories
  - housing service program descriptions
  - eligibility requirements

## Workgroups

The aim is to make it easier for people with disabilities to navigate systems and programs. This could reduce some of the barriers.

We hope to spark greater support for policies that expand employment opportunities and quality of life for people with disabilities.

## Employment Workgroup

Goal: Increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and offer resources.

Plans for 2024

- “Day in the Life” event for people with disabilities
  - interaction with legislators and share their personal employment experiences
- Developing Employment Resources pages on the RQC website. This will include
  - how to advocate for oneself
  - know your rights
  - benefits analysis services
  - using transportation apps
  - stories from people with disabilities
    - describing their employment journey from searching for a job to getting hired and everything in between

# REGIONAL COUNCILS

## Region 10



### Staff

- Coordinator:  
Elijah Gray started in the fall of 2023. Elijah's background is in education, with a focus on program development and management.
- Associate:  
Marta Milliken

In December, the Region 10 RQC hosted the International Day of Persons with Disabilities Celebration in conjunction with the MaxAbility Taskforce in Rochester.

We heard from keynote speaker and performer Gaelynn Lea, as well as Rochester Mayor Kim Norton.



Elijah  
and  
Gaelynn Lea

## Workgroups

### Housing

- Rewrote some housing statutes in accessible plain language
- Collaborating with Metro RQC to compile housing resources. The resources are on the RQC website.
- Working on an Accessibility Tour. This will educate attendees on
  - what accessible housing is or is not
  - how to advocate for accessibilities
  - the benefits for developers to create spaces for people with disabilities
  - how accessibility benefits everyone

### Transportation

- Working with SE MN Together to meet the needs for transportation for people with disabilities in the region
- Met with Minnesota Department of Transportation to lay out a plan for forming a Regional Transportation Coordinating Council
- Planning a Transportation Listening Session is being scheduled. Participants to include
  - People with lived experiences
  - Providers
  - Elected officials
  - Agency staff

Region 10 Quality Council Staff and RQC Manager Kerri Leucuta served on the planning committee for The Minnesota Gathering for Person-Centered Practices. This was in partnership with the Institute on Community Integration (ICI).

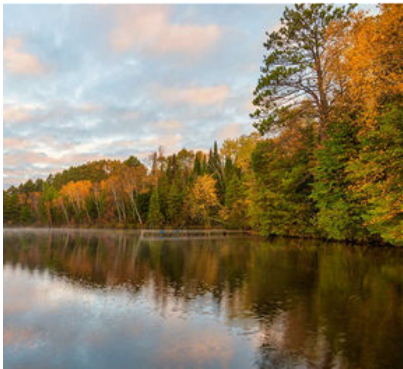
The In-Person gatherings in both the north and south part of the state held Learning Sessions to gather feedback from a wide variety of stakeholders around the staffing shortage.

### Results highlighted

- the delivery of person-centered services
- how the shortage is limiting inclusion
- what supports are needed
- alternative strategies to provide person-centered support

# REGIONAL COUNCILS

## West Central



### Staff

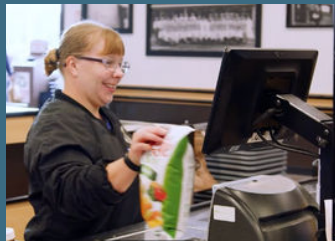
- Coordinator:  
Donna Atherton
- Associate:  
Katie Cragg

## Employment Workgroup

The West Central RQC completed Disability Employment Awareness videos and infographics.

The videos included people with disabilities and employers. The videos highlight:

- the value of people with disabilities in the workforce
- employer experiences
- inclusion
- accommodations
- the importance of earning at least minimum wage



The videos are on the [West Central RQC Employment Workgroup](#) website page. Videos were also shared on YouTube, Facebook, CTV, and LinkedIn.

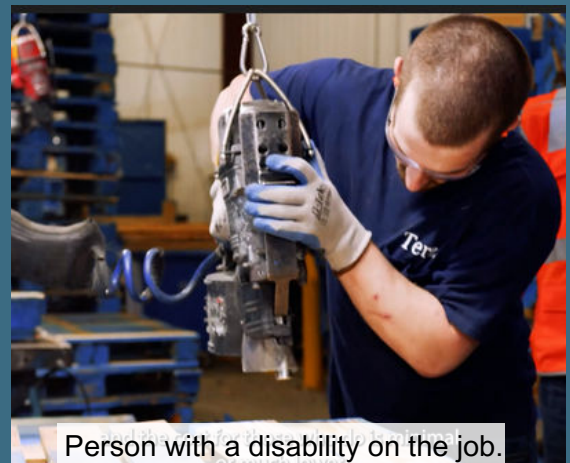
Plans for this year include

- Hybrid viewing and panel discussion on the documentary Hearts of Glass.
  - The documentary highlights a hydroponic greenhouse that grows crops while providing meaningful, competitively-paid jobs for people with disabilities.
  - The panel will include
    - the filmmaker
    - employees of Vertical Harvest
    - employment specialists
  - Tentative date: April 11th.
- Reverse Job Fair. People with disabilities highlight their skills and interests

## Transition to Adulthood Workgroup

- Anita Raymond from Volunteers of America presented a training on The Promise of Supported Decision Making.
  - the training provided information on guardianship and how supported decision making can give a person more freedom to make choices, with help if needed.
- Developed a Transition Check list & Resources. The checklist is available in English, Kurdish, Somali & Spanish.
  - Comprehensive list of what things a student with disabilities should be doing to help the transition process.
    - based on grade in school & age
- Developed Transition binders and sent to schools in the region. Materials are available on the [RQC website](#).
- Financial Planning webinar 6:30 February 22nd. See [website](#) for details

The West Central workgroup website pages include resources on [employment](#) and [transition to adulthood](#).



Person with a disability on the job.



# REGIONAL COUNCILS

## New Fund Reimburses for Costs of Reasonable Accommodations

The Quality Councils recently learned about the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund (ERAF). The Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) created an accommodation fund for employers.

Small to mid-sized Minnesota employers can request reimbursement for expenses for reasonable accommodations for job applicants and employees with disabilities. The purpose is to encourage employment of people with disabilities by reducing any perceived or real financial barriers.

Some examples of reasonable accommodations

- Ergonomic workstations
- Specialized software
- Captioning services
- Special equipment
- Transcription of materials into Braille or audio formats
- Wheelchair ramp
- much more

The ERAF Coordinator is available for technical assistance and consultation at no cost to employers. ERAF is a two-year pilot program, ending in June 30, 2025.

## Culture of Safety

(continued from page 1)

- Give providers the resources they need to provide person-centered, positive supports to support self-determination
- Consider developing and piloting a regional support model for 245D-licensed providers for challenging situations. This could be similar to the Disability Services Division regional resource specialists

The Data Action groups in Arrowhead and West Central for 2023 made no formal recommendations, but did highlight learning lessons/talking points for DHS to review.

The Regional Quality Council is a group of people working together to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. Each Council welcomes people with diverse experiences, especially people with disabilities and their families, to join the council in their region.

For more information, go to:

[www.qualitycouncilmn.org/contact](http://www.qualitycouncilmn.org/contact)

The RQC collaborates with regional stakeholders and partners to monitor and improve

- the quality of services
- person-centered outcomes
- overall quality of life for individuals with disabilities

A grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services supports Region Quality Councils.

The Arc Minnesota and The Arc Northland are Fiscal Hosts.



CONNECT WITH US!

