

# Spring 2015 Newsletter



# IRIS CONNECTIONS



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# Key Terms in this issue of IRIS Connections

**Self-determination** refers to a person having control over all aspects of his or her life and exercising basic rights such as citizenship, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is guided by five core principles of Freedom, Authority, Support, Responsibility and Confirmation. Self-direction is a tool people use to create and control supports that help them live the life they choose.



**Budget Authority** is the decision-making control a person has over how an individual Medicaid budget is spent. Individuals with budget authority have the freedom to create person-centered supports that meet their needs, are guided by their personal preferences, and are fiscally responsible. Wisconsin's IRIS program offers complete budget authority to people who enroll.

**Employer Authority** means people have the option to hire their own workers. Individuals with employer authority are able to directly hire personal care workers without using a provider agency. In the IRIS program, this is done with the support of a Fiscal Employer Agent, who completes background checks, pays workers, handles taxes, and ensures that the person is following the rules as an employer.

## UPCOMING EVENTS OF INTEREST

**APRIL 15-17, 2015**

**ADRC Conference**

La Crosse Center, La Crosse, WI

**APRIL 30 - MAY 2, 2015**

**Autism Society of Wisconsin**

**Annual Conference**

Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

**April 30, 2015**

**Western Region Recovery and**

**Wellness Consortium, Chippewa County**

**Mental Health and Substance Abuse Summit**

Heyde Center for the Arts, Chippewa Falls, WI

**MAY 17-19, 2015**

**Alzheimer's Association**

**Annual Wisconsin Network Conference**

Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

**APRIL 30 - MAY 1, 2015**

**Circles of Life Conference**

Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, WI

**JUNE 1-2, 2015**

**Living a Self-Determined Life:**

**InControl WI Conference**

Glacier Canyon Lodge, Wilderness Resort, Baraboo, WI

# Kelsey Bustos



Kelsey Bustos is a vibrant, kind 24-year-old woman who lives with her family in Appleton, WI. In August of 2014, without notice, Kelsey's provider of daily supports closed permanently. Kelsey's mom, Lisa, and parents of other participants stepped into action, as families do. By using her budget authority, Kelsey was able to design supports with her family that met her needs and increased her involvement in her community.

Lisa describes her definition of budget authority in these words: "Much like you, I wake up every day with great certainty that I can choose what I want to do with my life, who I want to associate with, where I want to live, what car I drive, who works for me and/or who I work for. Imagine one day you woke up and someone you did not know made all of these decisions for you. Imagine you lived with people you did not know, but (you were required to do so) because they were 'like' you and it worked best for economic reasons, not what was best for you. Imagine if you could not go to the movies or visit family or friends because it just did not work for others to take you. Imagine a stranger giving you a bath. Worse yet, (imagine that stranger) not caring so much that you need a bath, that your hair is combed, or your teeth are brushed. Imagine this was happening to your daughter or your son."

By putting her **budget authority** into action, Kelsey has surrounded herself with people who care about her to care for her. Her communication abilities have improved. She is more comfortable in social settings, and has made friends. She is a budding photographer, so proud of the pictures she takes. She has blossomed into such a caring person because she gives what she gets. This is all a direct result of her self-directed supports through the IRIS program and her partnership with her TMG IRIS Consultant.

KELSEY BUSTOS

# Sharon LaCosse



For many people who are enrolled in IRIS, **employer authority** provides them opportunities to stay in their home with the right type of support at the right time. Sharon describes herself as an “independent woman.” She is a grandmother, mother, neighbor, and generous friend.

Sharon began partnering with the TMG ICA in 2012 after being on the waiting list for services in St Croix County. She explains that self-directing her supports through the IRIS program was an obvious choice for her. Sharon knew that she wanted to continue to remain in her home in Hudson with her son, Shane. She wanted to continue to have an active role in controlling who provided her personal supports. She felt confident she could count on family to remain as her voice when she is no longer able to express what she wants for her life and care needs. Sharon employs Shane to provide supports that help maintain her health and safety in her community. The few hours each week he provides support have kept Sharon in her own home instead of having to move to a more restrictive and costly medical facility. “I need him to be here for me. Not just to help me with things I can’t do, but to help me feel safe.”

Diagnosed with emphysema in 1990, Sharon reports she has worked hard to create a life for herself that allows her to feel in control of who walks in and out of her doors. Sharon weaves together natural supports and community resources with a small amount of paid supports to create a life that she feels “most would love to have.” When asked if she is able to imagine her life where she wasn’t in control of her supports and services, Sharon responded, “I don’t think I would have a good attitude if someone was telling me where and how to live. I just want to live my life and not have someone else tell me how to live it.”

When asked what current goals she is working on as well as what she enjoys doing for fun, Sharon laughed and said, “I like seeing others smile. I have what I need in my life right now; I like to make other people happy as well.” She shares that having those in your life who know you is how you ensure your life is directed the way you want. “My independence is important to me. It means I can do what I want and when I want unless someone else convinces me I can’t.” She also added, “I can tell you convincing me is difficult to do; just ask my son.”

SHARON LaCOSSE

# Pam DeVuyst

Pam is a vibrant woman who is generous of spirit and supports all people. She lives and works in her home community of Kenosha, WI. Pam is completing her bachelor's degree in education while continuing to teach school-age children 20 hours a week at a local Christian daycare. When you ask Pam what she likes about having both **budget and employer authority**, she says, "it gives me more independence. I have the freedom to choose my own workers. I have a strong social network in Kenosha, so I can recruit the people I trust."



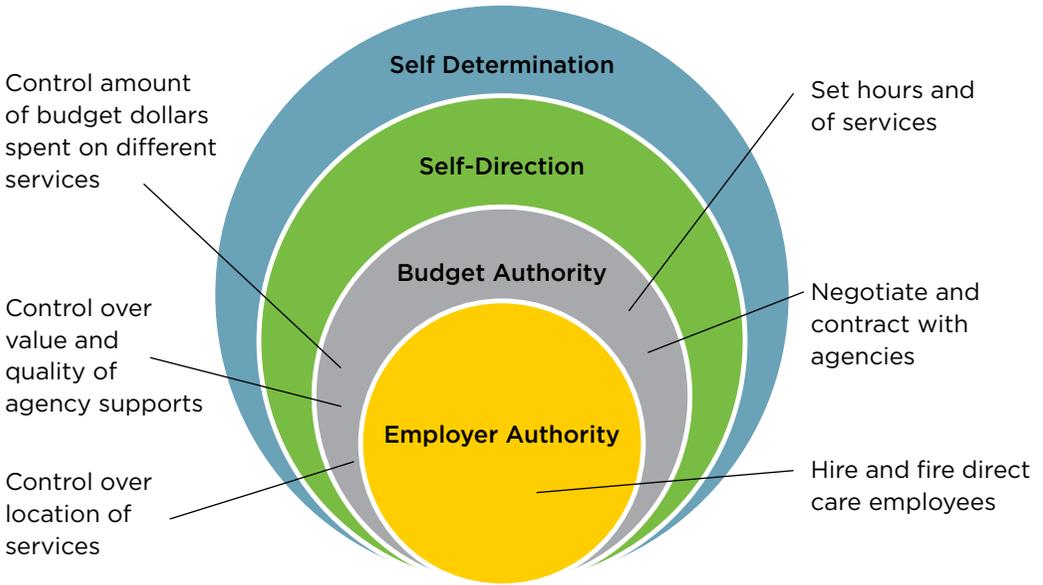
Pam's employer authority and community network helped her develop a blended set of supports. She used Division of Vocational Rehabilitation funding to pay for college tuition, and natural supports to help with job development and to find her current employer. Pam uses her IRIS budget and IRIS Self-Directed Personal Care to provide her support throughout her day both at home and at work.

Pam shares her story in hopes others will find value in her experiences. "I was mainstreamed in high school, but my foster parents put me in a sheltered workshop when I graduated. They didn't think I could make it in college," Pam said. She spent six years in the sheltered workshop but never gave up on her dream of going to college and getting a job. For the next 12 years, she was in a sheltered workshop part of the week and working in a daycare center the rest of the week. Pam's drive and desire led her to completing her associate's degree and securing her current job. Pam tells all of us, "Don't give up - there are always jobs out there, but you have to go after them - they won't just fall in your lap." Budget and employer authority in IRIS are valuable tools that people can use to help them meet their long-term care needs and reach their employment goals.

PAM DeVUYST

# Budget and Employer Authority

## Key Parts of Living a Self-Determined Life Comparison



## LOCAL OFFICE HOURS

As a certified IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA), TMG is required to have regularly scheduled office hours in different areas of the state. You may wonder why a program that focuses on spending time with people in their homes would require ICAs to have available office hours. The purpose is simply to offer another way for people enrolled in IRIS and the staff from the TMG ICA to connect.

IRIS Consultant Supervisors and Area Associate Directors will be available at the sites to:

- Answer questions about your individual supports and services plan.
- Talk with you about finding a job in the community.
- Explore local resources.
- Address your other questions or concerns.

# Coming to a Community Near You



We will not be able to hold office hours in every community, so we're trying this out in places where there are larger numbers of people enrolled in IRIS. We will have regularly scheduled office hours in the following communities:

| Location   | Dates                       | Time                  |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Barron County ADRC</b><br>Barron County Government Center<br>335 E Monroe Avenue, Room 100<br>Barron, WI 54812                        | 1st Tuesday of each month   | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.     |
| <b>La Crosse Public Library - Trustee Room</b><br>800 Main Street, La Crosse, WI 54601   | 1st Tuesday of each month   | 2 - 4 p.m.            |
| <b>Wausau - Northcentral Technical College</b><br>1000 W Campus Drive, Wausau, WI 54401  | 4th Wednesday of each month | 11:30 a.m - 1:30 p.m. |
| <b>Eau Claire - L.E. Philips Memorial Public Library - Red Cedar Room</b><br>400 Eau Claire Street, Eau Claire, WI 54701                 | 1st Thursday of each month  | 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.      |
| <b>Dodgeville - ADRC of Southwest Wisconsin</b><br>303 W Chapel Street, Dodgeville, WI 53533   | 4th Thursday of each month  | 1:30 - 3:30 p.m.      |
| <b>Appleton - Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin - Darboy - Community Room</b><br>N189 Stoney Brook Road, Appleton, WI 54915 | 2nd Wednesday of each month | 2 - 4 p.m.            |
| <b>Manitowoc - ADRC of the Lakeshore</b><br>Manitowoc County Office Complex<br>4319 Expo Drive, Room 302<br>Manitowoc, WI 54221          | 2nd Thursday of each month  | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.     |
| <b>Portage Public Library - Tech Room</b><br>253 W Edgewater Street, Portage, WI 53901   | 3rd Thursday of each month  | 1 - 3 p.m.            |
| <b>Waukesha County - ADRC</b><br>514 Riverview Avenue, Room 184<br>Waukesha, WI 53188  | 3rd Friday of each month    | 2 - 4 p.m.            |
| <b>Milwaukee Public Library - Central</b><br>814 W Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233   | 1st Friday of each month    | 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.     |
| <b>Kenosha County Center</b><br>19600 75th Street, Bristol, WI 53104   | 2nd Monday of each month    | 9 - 11 a.m.           |

Most of the office hours will be in buildings that have meeting rooms where we can have discussions that are private and confidential. Local libraries, Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs), and other local organizations have been very helpful in partnering with us to use their meeting rooms. This means that we do not need to own or lease offices around the state.

**Please note:** Even though the TMG ICA may have office hours in your community, your IRIS Consultant will not be available during these office hours and will still visit you in your home. You are not required to use the office hours, they are simply there for your convenience if you want to drop in. Please contact your IRIS Consultant if you have questions about local office hours.



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## DID YOU KNOW?

At the end of 2014, the TMG ICA equipped all of our IRIS Consultants with new computer tablets and smart phones that can go with consultants wherever they go. This was a big change, but the end result has been completely worth it. By putting this mobile technology in the hands of all of our consultants, TMG ensures that you and your consultant can use the computer tablet for all kinds of things... researching local providers, searching for forms or documents, taking notes, and building your IRIS plan right at your "kitchen table." The smart phones help IRIS Consultants connect to the Internet, and of course, are great for old fashioned phone calls, too.

**Empowering people to create meaningful lives in their communities.™**

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