

Agenda Item 6.

Presented by Chris Miller, Rosie Lasca, & Rhiannon Morsch



INDEPENDENT FACILITATOR TRAINING SPOTLIGHT

- ❖ **What this is:** A spotlight on the Independent Facilitator (IF) Trainings that our LVAC invested implementation funds into.
- ❖ **The need:** We had very few IFs in our area, and the ones we did have were spread across different counties, with some unable to travel due to regulations or because travel wasn't covered.
- ❖ **Why it mattered:** When someone needs an IF and there isn't one available, that's a real problem, especially in more remote areas.
- ❖ **The benefits:** We now have a lot more IFs than we used to, which has helped break down that barrier to access.
- ❖ **Today's presenters:** I'll hand it over to Rosie & Rhiannon to share who they are and walk us through the work they did.

Life Leap's IF Mentorship Program



About

In 2024 the Redwood Coast Regional Center SDAC Committee voted to use a portion of their SDP Implementation Funds to support a Mentorship Program to train more Independent Facilitators in their area.

RCRC had been experiencing a shortage of qualified IF's to serve their population. Life Leap Services was selected to develop the mentorship program and to recruit and train new IF's to support RCRC clients

Supports offered

- Recruitment of new Independent Facilitators
- One-to-one Coaching via phone or zoom for mentees
- A monthly group coaching call for mentees
- Available during business hours for quick email questions from mentees
- Creation of info docs for Mentees

Recruitment

- IFs were recruited from Life Leap's email list of families we serve and vendors we work with.
- I also posted in Social Media groups that were related to SDP, disability, and parent groups.
- Recruitment through word of mouth.
- I posted in the Independent Facilitator Slack Group.
- I attended/still attend various Independent Facilitator Zoom meetings and share about the mentorship there.

The Value of One-to-one Coaching

My Mentees report that:

- After taking an Independent Facilitator training course they still felt stuck on next steps. For instance, they did not know specific details of vendorization that are unique to their home RC.
- They felt stuck on the details of how to set up a small business.
- They felt nervous to take on an initial client because so much about being an Independent Facilitator comes from gaining first hand experience and they had no one to talk to/or sense of IF community. .

The Value of the Group Zoom Call

My Mentees report:

- That our Monthly Group Zoom meetings are invaluable. They have created a sense of community. They are now friends with other IFs in the Mentee Program and they share resources with one another. They feel supported and not alone.
- The mentees love the chance to ask questions and learn from each other in a group. Every Group Zoom I give a lesson on a new topic. I also keep the mentees up to date with changes in the SDP program.

Results so far

1. In one year of the mentorship program, 15 individuals have utilized aspects of the training.
 1. 8 are currently active IFs that started with the Mentorship Program. 5 are still working on vendorization, and 1 is waiting for her first client
- 3 mentees are bilingual/Spanish speaking
 - 1 mentee is a member of a tribal community in the RCRC catchment area and wants to serve hard to reach underserved areas

Hi! ¡Hola! My Name is
PATTY SANCHEZ

About Me

Helping others has always been second nature to me. As an Independent Facilitator, I started Guiding Independence to help guide individuals and their families through the Self-Determination Program.

My goal is to empower my clients to gain more control over the services they receive and help them achieve their hopes and dreams.



"As a newer IF, having an experienced mentor like Rhiannon has been an instrumental part of my growth as an IF. She has been very helpful in counseling me through my first PCP process. The monthly mentorship group meetings are a great way for all the IFs to learn and connect."

Patty Sanchez

Having this Mentorship Program as a resource makes becoming an IF seem like a more attainable goal. After completing the online training, I still felt lost and confused about carrying out my role as an Independent Facilitator. Now I am gaining the necessary tools to be a successful Independent Facilitator.

Kassy Velasco

"The Mentorship has been invaluable in getting me started on this exciting new career. In the mentorship group we are encouraged to all participate, to ask questions, and build knowledge together as a community."

Josh Stithem

"I am now working almost full-time as an IF. The Mentorship has been like receiving the keys to a meaningful new life path. It has saved me so much time and spared me the headache of trying to figure everything out on my own!"

Monica

Independent Facilitator Training: Building the Backbone of the Self-Determination Program



Why investment
in IF training
matters

About Me

My name is Rosie Lasca. I am a parent of a Regional Center client, and my son has been in the Self-Determination Program for five years.

This work is personal to me. I have seen how Self-Determination can change a person's life when families have the right information, the right support, and someone to walk with them through the process.

My Experience & Qualification:

I have supported Self-Determination and Independent Facilitator training since 2018. Over the years, I have helped train more than 2,000 individuals, including aspiring IFs, parents, community members, and professionals who want to better understand the Self-Determination Program.

I am a member of the ACRC SDAC and a board member of Cal-IF.

I have a degree in Communication, Disability Rights, and Social Sciences, and worked for civil judge on labor law and civil cases.





What Students Say About IFTA

“This was my third and by far the best IF training. Incredibly useful information, delivered in manageable chunks and very concise and easy to understand.”

-Lilian Ansari

“It’s worth noting that you can access the course even after completion to catch up on anything missed or to take additional notes.”

-Savannah M. Garibay

“The training was clear, practical, and easy to follow... I really felt taken care of throughout the process.”

-Angie Echeverria

“I’m going to require and pay for all my staff to take this course.”

-Stan Prather

“I am a mother of two regional center clients who are going into the 4th year of SDP. I am also a psychotherapist, having worked extensively with clients living with dual diagnoses...All that said: This training far exceeded my expectations! First and foremost, Rosie's enthusiasm and energy for this field really shines through. She is a delightful presenter who keeps things real. As overwhelming as all the information was at times, it was easy to come back to the training because it was delivered in a way that was understandable and relatable.

I would highly recommend this course for parents and guardians of clients as well as clients themselves of the regional centers, who are exploring SDP..., just because all the steps involved in the process can be overwhelming and complicated...

I also appreciate the fact that the training will remain accessible so that learners can continue to stay updated as so many changes from all sides ...Thank you Rosie!

-Debbie B Fisher

<https://www.iftrainingacademy.com/p/testimonials>

How our SDAC & Regional Center Training Models Work

When we partner with an SDAC or Regional Center, we can provide training in different ways depending on the local need. We offer **asynchronous and synchronous training**.

Some contracts use a cohort model. Students complete the online course and attend live Zoom review sessions. These sessions give students time to ask questions, review the material, and connect with peers.

Students do not have to wait until the end of the cohort to receive their certificate. They receive certification as soon as they complete the course.

Other models, like Redwood Coast Regional Center, use a sponsorship model. Students are vetted by the SDAC team, enrolled on a rolling basis, and students complete the training at their own pace.

How SDAC Funding Has Supported Our Work

SDAC funding has made it possible for IFTA to support IF training, SDP education, and materials across several communities.

We have had IF training contracts or sponsorship support with:

- Redwood Coast Regional Center (Sponsored of 10 individuals for IF training course)
- Regional Center of the East Bay (cohort of 30 trained IFs)
- Kern Regional Center (cohort of 30 trained IFs)
- North Bay Regional Center (cohort of 20 trained IFs)

Other funded work has included:

- Alta California Regional Center support for the SDP Starter Package and *Building My Future with Self-Determination* workbook translated in English, Spanish, Russian, Punjabi, Korean, Dari, and Pashto.
- ACRC in person SDP workshops in rural areas and virtual trainings with interpretation in Spanish, Russian, Punjabi.
- ACRC Service Coordinator SDP training and IF roundtable
- Central Valley Regional Center SDP coaching and workshops in English and Spanish
- Regional Center of East Bay's Self-Determination Program guidebook in English and Spanish

What is next at IFTA



The I.F. University

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Community
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Welcome to Independent Facilitator Training University
Continued and Advanced Learning Membership for SDP Independent Facilitators

IFTA Members - Tech Tuesday Co...
Welcome to our Tech Tuesday Series, where we will explore a new tool every Tuesday...

Resource Center: Templates and ...
Our Resource Center is here to provide you with top-notch templates and guidebooks...

Self-Determination 101
Click here to learn the basics of the California Self-Determination Program. This section...

DDS Updates & Directive Reviews
As DDS continues to refine and enhance the Self-Determination Program, it's crucial for...

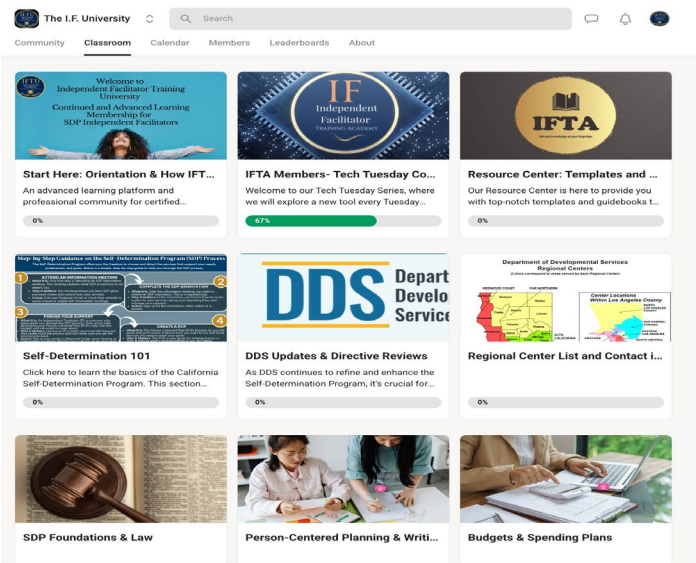
Regional Center List and Contact i...

Employment Law, Managing & Se...

Communication

Live: Webinar Wednesday (Works...
Review videos of live zoom meetings, where we discussed a variety of SDP topics and IF...

Writing and Monitoring Goals



We Are Building More IF Support

- Over the years, I have learned that IFs need more than a certificate. They need a place to keep learning, ask questions, and feel connected.
- Many IFs leave the field because they feel isolated. They do not have coworkers down the hall. They do not always have a mentor. They may not have another IF nearby to talk through a difficult situation.
- That is why we are relaunching **the Independent Facilitator University** and building the **IF University Virtual Campus**.
- These spaces will focus on advanced IF topics, professional development, Tech Tuesdays, networking, peer connection, and the “water cooler” conversations that help people stay in the field.



Why Invest in IF Training



IF Training Leads to More Than Certificates

When SDACs fund IF training, you are not just funding a course or a certificate.

You are helping create:

- more available IFs
- more parent IFs who understand how to navigate SDP
- more professionals who can support SDP correctly
- more diverse IFs when language access is included
- more local capacity for families who are waiting for support

When we invest in IF training, we are investing directly in the growth and success of the Self-Determination Program.



Access Matters:

Language and Flexibility are important part of IF Training.

Online/Virtual training helps reach people across California, including rural communities where in-person training may not be realistic.

Language access is also critical. Funding would help increase language access.

To support language access our courses currently includes subtitles in: Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, and Chinese. We are working on a full Spanish IF course that will be released this year. This has been a slow self-funded project

It helps reduce barriers like distance, transportation, scheduling, and limited local availability.

When language access is funded, we do not just train more IFs, we train more diverse IFs who can support families in their own communities and languages.

Funding could help IF Training projects especially those that include language access make IF trainings accessible and possible for a more diverse population.

IF Training Works Best With Coaching and Mentorship

- **IF Training gives people the foundation.** Coaching and mentorship help them apply that foundation in real life.
- In places like Redwood Coast, the SDAC team sponsors IF Certification through IFTA, then provides IF mentorship from a local IF who knows the RCRC community, such as the support offered by Rhiannon.
- This kind of **continued training and mentorship matters** because the IF role can feel lonely, especially in rural areas. New IFs need someone to ask questions, someone to guide them, and someone who understands the work.
- **IF training, coaching, mentorship, roundtables, advanced training, and peer connection all work together to grow IF knowledge and keep IF in this field.**

Suggested SDAC IF Projects to Consider



IF Certification Training: Fund IF certification training that allows parents, professionals, self-advocates, and community members to learn the foundations of SDP through flexible options, including online self-paced access, virtual or in-person options.



Language Access and Culturally Responsive Training: Support IF course translated materials, bilingual sessions, and full-language training options so communities can grow diverse IFs who reflect the families they serve.



Coaching, Shadowing, and Mentorship: Fund hands-on coaching, virtual or local mentorship, and shadowing opportunities so new IFs can move from understanding the material to confidently applying it in real situations.



IF Roundtables and Peer Learning Networks: Support ongoing IF roundtables, SDP Q&A sessions, and Regional Center & IF meet-and-greets, so IFs stay informed, connected, continue learning, and don't feel isolated.



Advanced IF Training and Professional Development: Fund continued education on spending plans, Title 17, HCBS, FMS collaboration, employment law, ethics, communication, technology tools, and professional practice.



Practical Tools and Resource Development: Support the creation of templates, guidebooks, checklists, recorded trainings, and resource libraries that IFs, families, and self-advocates can use long after a training ends.

Thank You For Your Time and Attention

- Self-Determination has changed my family's life. I know what it can do when it works.
- But SDP cannot grow if families cannot find trained IFs to help them understand the process.
- It cannot grow if we do not support diverse IFs, parent IFs, rural IFs, and new IFs who are trying to learn this work.
- For many people who want to become Independent Facilitators, the cost of training can be a real financial burden, and without sponsorship, this can create disparities in who has the opportunity to become an IF.
- If we want Self-Determination to succeed, we must continue investing in the people and support systems that make Self-Determination possible.



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