



### Note from the Director

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The WILL Center was established twenty years ago as an independent living center. We were founded to become an actor in the effort to eliminate barriers in society that prevent people with disabilities from living full, complete, safe and happy lives in the community of their own choosing.

Our mission is to empower people – and to advocate for the deconstruction of barriers in society that are created by discrimination and racism – has led us to the understanding that discrimination, in any form, against any individual on any basis, empowers discrimination against everybody. Systemic racism and discrimination must be exposed and removed for the good of us all.

The WILL Center opposes systemic racism and discrimination. It advocates peaceful means to eliminate them wherever they are found in our society. It supports productive dialogue between members of the community, and endorses diversity and inclusion in the conversation. The WILL Center joins in solidarity with individuals and organizations that support these goals.

### Independent Living

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#### COVID Coach App:

If you're like me over the course of the past 3 months, you are feeling the weight of the 2020 pandemic personally. I've been stressed with all the news and media articles feeding me information what feels like from a water hose; I feel like I'm drowning most days.

I came across an app for my smart phone that has been a valuable tool in getting me to relax my mind and soul during this pandemic. We can all use some R&R in what seems to be the start of a tumultuous 2020.

COVID Coach is a mobile phone application for civilians, veterans, and service members affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID Coach is designed to help you improve your self-care and overall mental health during these difficult times. This application provides:

- Education about coping with this global pandemic;
- Tools for self-care;

- Tools to improve your emotional well-being;
- Trackers for working on personal goals that you set for yourself.

Other features include recordings of soothing sounds, suggestions for meditation and deep breathing techniques, and spiritual support.

Use the Mood Check feature to set a goal. Within this feature you can track your well-being, track anxiety, track your mood or track PTSD Symptoms. COVID Coach will help you find resources within your community and online. While managing your stress set challenge for yourself, use the tools button and pin your favorites for quick reference right when you need it.

Download the COVID Coach app in Apple, iTunes or other app stores.

## Youth Transition

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### Individualized Education Plans:

If I believe my child has a disability and could benefit from an Individualized Education Plan, (IEP), what steps should I take to make sure that my child gets the help that he/she needs?

Most important, remain calm. There are several organizations out there that can help. Centers of Independent Living now have Youth Transition Specialists on staff that can answer many of the questions parents or students may have about an IEP.

As your child's parent you hold a key role in the development of your child's education and future. Take an active role to help your child navigate this new and complex set of rules and regulations. After all, who knows your child's hopes, dreams, fears, and challenges/limitations better than you? So take the time to learn all you can about your child's disability because it will pay off in the end.

Anyone can make the request to have a student evaluated for an IEP at any time. An IEP can be requested verbally or in writing. However, it is always best to put things in writing. This gives you a record of the request and a means to hold others accountable.

An IEP is a plan that is crafted by a team of individuals to meet the unique needs of each student with a disability. This document ensures that each student is given access to a free and appropriate education while utilizing Special Education and Related Services to ensure that appropriate accommodations and or modifications are in place. The IEP also serves as a vehicle to set the stage for transition into adulthood, independent living, economic self-sufficiency, and/or higher education.

The School's Special Education Department will receive the verbal or written request. A parent must consent to having their child evaluated for Special Education and Related Services. The evaluation will take into account both academic and present functional levels to see if the student's disability has an adverse impact on their education. If the IEP team finds this to be true, then an IEP is granted.

If issues arise, do not worry. An IEP has important safeguards and procedures that help to protect the rights of the student and parents when resolving concerns. Also it never hurts to take along another person you trust to help take notes, provide support, and ask questions.

The WILL Center is a resource for you as you navigate this process. Please do not hesitate to contact us.

## **Low Vision**

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### **Social distancing for someone whom is blind or has low vision:**

As we have heard for several months, everyone social distance please. This is a challenging task for someone with limited or no vision. We use our senses to assist us with daily navigation. In the current time we struggle with this quest. Whether you are in your work location, at a business or at a public event, this task is on our minds as much as it's on yours.

Please respect our efforts not to bump you or cross your comfort zone. Before the mid-March announcement to social distance, I would be in a store and want to touch everything on the shelves. Today I don't enjoy going to a retail locations because I can't survey my environment due to the fear of encroaching on the space of others.

We can all get through this disruption in life by recognizing the balance or limitations of your fellow man.