**"Conversation on Visitability"**

**August 28, 2013**

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>> KATHY HATCH: This is Kathy Hatch, and I want to welcome everybody today. This IL Conversation is presented, as you know, by the IL NET, a national training and technical assistance program of Independent Living Research Utilization. That’s ILRU, those folks in Houston. It was organized and facilitated by me here at APRIL. So we're happy you could join us today and are looking forward to a lively discussion. We have an hour and a half, so we'll get started with an introduction or our speakers, and then they will discuss VISITABILLITY, Advocating for Basic Home Access.

I would ask everybody to put your phones on mute, and just go ahead and do it right now. Since this is a bridge line, it's sensitive to any kind of background noise. To do that you need to use \*6, and then if you have speak, if you need to come back on, it's \*6 to unmute as well. So \*6 to mute and \*6 to unmute.

We want to keep the conversation as conversational as possible, and I know questions will come up as we go through the material. So presenters will start, and we'll open it up for questions and answers following the presentation, but if you have questions during it, you can ask those. But we kind of would really like to hold them until the end of each presentation if you would.

Hopefully most of you will know, too, the IL Conversation is on our APRIL web site. You can go there for some print documents that will help you to follow along with what we're doing, and the web site is [www.APRIL‑rural.org](http://www.APRILrural.org). We're providing CART today as well, and if you go on the web site you can see the link to the CART if you're interested in doing that. That's for the captioning service today. You can also ask questions on the chat line if you go to the CART link. All right?

I just want to remind folks again cell phones and speaker phones sometimes cause distortion on the line so please try to get to a landline if you can to re‑call in or make sure to mute your phone when you're not speaking.

Participant: >> Would you say the web site address again?

>> KATHY HATCH: It's [www.APRIL‑rural.org](http://www.APRILrural.org).

>> PARTICIPANT: Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: You bet.

I would like to tell you a little about each of our presenters today. First we have Darren Larson who has worked as an IL Specialist for Summit Independent Living Center in Missoula, Montana since 2006. He is chair of Montana's Independent Living Housing Task Force, which is a statewide task force concerned with extending affordable and accessible housing options for people with disabilities. Darren grew up in the small town of Eureka and has a bachelor's in political science.

>> DARREN LARSON: Hi. Let me add, too, I want to add for the audience, you know, I have cerebral palsy. So it may be a little bit difficult to understand me, but as we go you will hopefully be able to understand me more and more. Like Kathy says, if you don't understand me, and want to ask a question, go ahead and unmute your phone with \*6. Go ahead and interrupt me. I will be happy to repeat myself. Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: Thanks, Darren. We appreciate that. And for folks, too, on ‑‑ if you go to the chat line, too, we may be able to help there some there, too. There is the ‑‑ I'm sorry ‑‑ there're talking points -- some information up on the APRIL web site that will help with some of Darren's presentation what he is going to be talking about, too.

So, Dot Nary is a wheelchair user, a disability researcher/advocate and former staff member at several independent living centers. Her research interests focus on health promotion, community participation, access to recreation and advocacy training for people with disabilities and on creating accessible communities for all. She is a Research Associate at the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas and serves as Staff Advisor to Able Hawks and Allies, which is a University of Kansas student group that works to increase disability awareness on campus. She currently serves on the Executive Committee of the Disability Section of the American Public Health Association and under a fellowship from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research is completing research that explores the impact of inaccessible homes of friends and family on family members who are wheelchair users.

Again, they're here today to talk about VISITABILITY, Advocating for Basic Home Access, and the presenters have asked me to start with just a quick definition of Visitability, and I think that's to make the differentiation between Visitability and Universal Design.

So **basic home access features** include:

- A one zero step entrance on the main level,

- doorways and hallways measuring 32 to 36 inches, and

- a half bath on the main floor with maneuverable space for a walker, wheelchair or scooter.

So I think we all probably know that but we want to make that little definition clear.

And now I'd like to turn it over to Dot Nary. Would you like to get started, Dot?

>> DOT NARY: Sure, I'm ready. I know I'm preaching to the choir here but I think it's good to know that the issues that people face are being documented so that you can use them in the future in advocacy.

So let me start off by just describing the study. I conducted phone interviews with a diverse sample of 16 wheelchair users from across the U.S. with California, Kansas, Alabama, Missouri and a couple other states. When I asked about events that people missed out on, it was everything from wedding rehearsal dinners to Thanksgiving feasts to birthday parties to poker games. So it was everything that any person, disabled or non‑disabled, would want to participate in.

As you probably are not surprised, the main themes that I derived from the interview data were frustration and isolation. People are frustrated that after all these years some people had been in the chair for 40 years or more, that getting into homes is still an issue, and they know that their social networks and relationships are limited because of these home barriers.

Now let me just tell you a little bit about my sample. It was both male and female. The average age was 42 with a range from 25 to 63. 11 people used power devices, five used manual chairs, a couple of people identified as being Hispanic. We had 11 Caucasians, two African Americans, an Asian, a Native American and one reported being of mixed race. They reported living an average of 19 years with their disabilities with a range of 7 to 41 years. This is important because these weren't people who were newly, say, just had a spinal cord injury and adjusting to the things they could and could not do right then. These were people who had had a disability for a long time and had worked through other barriers to be community participants.

We had a range of education from high school diplomas to graduate degrees, people who worked, some were retired, six volunteered in the community, a range of household income from under $15,000 to over $50,000, and seven people reported living in rural communities. So I think we got a good range of diversity in all types of ways.

Some additional themes that came out were increased health risks, both physical and emotional. Physical from maybe having to be carried in or out and having somebody slip or fall. Emotional from being left out of things that are important to everybody to be involved in. People knew that they had less robust relationships in some ways, they had less face time in sharing, less intimacy and I don't mean sexual intimacy, but intimacy with family and friends because you're not able to spend time with people. And maybe the thing that is most interesting or very interesting is that almost every participant reported difficulty in discussing this issue with family members and friends. It was almost a taboo topic. It raised a lot of conflict, and many people had just stopped raising the issue because it was so difficult. As one person said, “It could feel so incredibly limiting” and also how distraught friends or family are that their home isn't accommodating. Then there's the kind of added feeling of being a burden because now I'm causing people distress.

Another person said, “It's actually kind of what I would say heartbreaking. It's very hard to watch families struggle. You have to say it's how I feel but also it's how I never want to make anyone else feel bad if I feel bad, and it's sort of impossible to avoid it in that situation.”

So I thought those were pretty eloquent around why it's a difficult topic to discuss with family and friends. Some people said it's almost like pointing out flaws in their home and they immediately become defensive. So it's not just the barriers. It's the difficulty in discussing the barriers so that you can try to deal with them in order to participate. I thought that was pretty significant.

People talked about, again, disappointment and anger about being excluded from events because barriers are not addressed. One person said, “I think a lot of people start not going anywhere because they don't want to have the disappointment when they get somewhere and they can't get in. Even after years, even with people they know, people still face significant barriers.

One guy said, “I've got some family members that I haven't been inside their homes for 20 years, maybe more. There's definitely been a few times when it's been really, really frustrating to not join these gatherings, and especially to hear about it later and hear about all the great things that went on. I just smile and nod and say, ‘Oh, I'm so happy for you.’” So it's being left out of things and feeling that people are aware of it but they just haven't done anything about it, which is difficult.

Another theme was the barriers to strengthening and maintaining relationships. One person said, “It makes it really hard to nourish relationships because it requires an extra effort, then to engage with the rest of the community, whether it's friends, acquaintances or family.” Another person said, “You have friends, you talk on the phone, but there's nothing like face‑to‑face interaction with people. So relationships are weakened. I don't think they're as strong as they could be or should be with my family especially.”

So, again, people know that they don't have the same level of social networks and same strength of relationship that non‑disabled people have or non‑wheelchair users have who can easily get in and out of people's houses.

People talked about being denied the opportunity to view people's home interiors. Somebody said, and I thought this was really eloquent, “You don't get a chance to see how they live and see stuff that people like to use in their home as sort of a museum of their lives, their pictures and all the different stuff that goes on. So it's not seeing people's space, like somebody's niece gets her own bedroom and decorates it and the wheelchair user cannot visit to see that.”

Another person said, “I was painting this color in my house and a bunch of people admired it, and then one of my friends went out and painted the same color in her house. It was a big deal because she's only done white paint before. There was a house warming party, and I couldn't come to it. It was like I was the one who had inspired her and I thought it was really weird that I couldn't even get to the party to see it.”

So it's the big events like graduation parties and family reunions, but also the little things like seeing the interiors of people's homes.

As I mentioned, raising the topic of home barriers creates a lot of tension. Again, it's almost a taboo topic because people feel they're complaining about the homes of the very people they're close to and rely on and want reciprocal relations with. One person talked about a friend who was sick, and she went to bring some soup to her. Her 4‑year‑old daughter had to get out and go to the door and have the person come to get it. So it wasn't even being able to do those little things you do for each other really easily. It had to involve another person.

One person said she went to visit her elderly grandmother and she had something to give her. The grandmother was coming out to the car to get it, and she fell backwards on the steps and the person couldn't go help her. So in the act of doing something good to bond with her grandmother, she actually almost caused an accident. Her grandmother was okay once she caught her breath, but no one likes to see an 80‑year‑old woman fall on stairs and not be able to help. So all these seemingly little things that involve relationships with the people closest to you, there's an element of stress and burden about it that people express.

They also talked about disappointment when a newly built home was not accessible. One person says, “I have yet to figure out how to say to someone, I can't believe you modified your home and you just didn't factor me in.” That's a very difficult conversation to have. Another one said a relative built a brand‑new home from scratch and there were like three steps to the front door and to most of the doors. So, again, it's sort of feeling that you're not important enough for people to think about these things when they plan their remodels or build their homes.

Another topic that was important was a lack of discretion when gaining access to homes or in using them. People said, “I agree to be carried in, but when that happens, the whole action stops and everybody stares, and I become the object of attention.” Another said, “I don't care if people stare at me. As long as I get to be part of the action, let them stare away. I don't care.” But for most people, that issue of not being able to just slip in and out like everyone else was a problem. One person said, “then you come in and everybody just kind of stops so you can get settled and all eyes are on you.”

Another one said, “Of course, it kind of drops your cool points when somebody has to drag you like dead weight into the bathroom.” So it's getting into the house and not just being able to be part of the flow of the property. It's attracting all of that attention when you come in.

One other idea that I thought was interesting was the idea of resignation. People said, “I have friends who I haven't been to their house for years because I can't get into it and I’m kind of missing out on the functions. I've just given up. I don't even try anymore. It's just too hard.” That really was difficult to hear because several people said, I have stopped trying. If it's easy and somewhere else, I'll go, but when my friends and family have functions in their houses that are so inaccessible, it's hard for me. I've just stopped going. Then as a result, pretty soon, people stop inviting me.” So that becomes a barrier in a relationship no matter who is going where. It's just people start to lose touch with each other, and I thought that was maybe one of the saddest points of all.

So I will be publishing this and I will certainly be happy to distribute it when it's available. Again thought, for the disability community, this probably isn't a lot of news. Even for me, a person who has experienced barriers, the depth and the extent of the disappointment and frustration and the effect on social relationships is something that is huge, and I think it really has a lot to do with people's emotional health. So I think this is important information. And I would be happy to take questions.

>> KATHY HATCH: Anybody have any questions they'd like to ask Dot? Dot, is this something you think that ‑‑ this is Kathy ‑‑ is this something you think we can use in the disability community in grants and things like that to show how this kind of thing affects people?

>> DOT NARY: That's a great question, Kathy. This is an exploratory study. I wanted to get a sense of what's happening. People can use it for advocacy. What I'd like to do at some point is devise some survey questions that can be used, say, when the Centers for Disease Control or other federal agencies do surveys of the population, because this can help to document the barriers, and then we can use it to promote Visitability policy.

We have this huge generation of baby‑boomers aging, and I don't think they're going to put up with some of the things that we presently put up with being excluded from social events they're used to being included in. So, Darren will talk about in the policy part, I think the time is ripe, and that's one of the reasons I wanted to get the ball rolling with this study. We have some good ideas now about the categories of ways that this affects people, and if we could start to craft some survey questions that are valid, we can collect some really good data. And I think people can use it in their own communities to promote Visitability policy.

>> KATHY HATCH: That's what I see this ‑‑ how I see this being used. Because that's one of the things that's always been lacking in some of the things we do. Often there's just no data, there's nothing that we can use, at least nothing specific.

>> DOT NARY: And for Healthy People, 2020, which is the nation's health promotion goals, there are questions in the disability section about social connectedness and reducing isolation. So this data and data we will collect in the future speaks to that healthy people objective. The goal is to reduce social isolation for people with disabilities and we have some great evidence of that here.

>> KATHY HATCH: Yeah, we sure do.

A question, too, to everybody out there, do you have any ideas about questions that Dot might be able to ask in the survey.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is Craig from the Center for Independent Living in Dayton, Ohio. Hi.

>> DOT NARY: Good, good. Thanks for joining us.

>> PARTICIPANT: Thank you for having me. One of the things we're trying to get a study on, because when you have to get politicians involved in drafting any ordinances or anything like that, you always have to throw money in it. So we were looking at if there's been any studies from like the Firefighters Association on decreasing the amount of workman's comp claims by having Visitability in the community.

>> DOT NARY: That's interesting. Yeah. Do you mean that they wouldn't have to deal with barriers when they were addressing a home fire?

>> PARTICIPANT: Well, yeah. I mean, you know, if you're a paramedic and you're going in with a stretcher and you don't have to deal with steps and you have wider doorways and hopefully an accessible bathroom, the doorway swings out. One of the problems for an inaccessible bathroom is if the door swings in and you happen to fall. Statistics show most falls happen in a bathroom. And sometimes the firefighters can't get in because you're on the floor and blocking the door.

>> DOT NARY: That's a good point. I'll make a note of that. I'll bet there's ‑‑ that's very creative way to look at this and it's very real. I think there are a lot of ways we could look at benefits of Visitable homes, and I mean I'm all for universal design but at least if people can visit homes, there's probably many ways to look at benefits just like you've said. That's great. Good idea.

When I talk about survey questions, I mean like when they do surveys of the U.S. population for various health issues, we would craft a question like*: How often are you able to easily visit the homes of friends and family members recognizing that social networks and social connections are very important to health?* Kathy, that's what I was kind of thinking about there. There're a lot of other questions to pose too, questions about Visitability, too. Thank you for that suggestion.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is David with the Accessible Living Center in Louisville. Kind of piggybacking on what the individual said earlier, this is a win-win for everybody, Visitability makes it easier for the mother with the stroller trying to get in, a person with the groceries. When you have a wider door you can get your couch in, your refrigerator. We should be marketing it to home builders to say this is a win for everyone, and as we know, the ***Silver Tsunami*** is already hitting us and people will acquire disabilities. There's a greater percentage than ever over age of 65 that will acquire a disability. So it is cheaper economic‑wise for all the states, it's much more beneficial to age in place instead of going into a nursing home with Medicaid and Medicare paying for them. You age in your own home and the person doesn't lose the spend‑down on the Medicaid. So it makes good sense and plus your resale value on your home is much more valuable when you do that as well. So if you can get the home builders to try to get on board it really helps. I wrote a 100‑word article to our state's largest newspaper. They printed it and I said some of those things, mainly about HOME‑A‑RAMA, the new homes they build every year and I have never been able to attend one in Louisville except one designed specifically for me. It's a smart decision to go with economic‑wise.

>> KATHY HATCH: I love the Silver Tsunami. That's a new one. I haven't heard that before.

>> PARTICIPANT: Hello.

>> KATHY HATCH: Thank you, David.

Go ahead.

>> PARTICIPANT: [ INAUDIBLE ]

>> KATHY HATCH: Someone had a question, I think. I can't hear you, though.

>> DARREN LARSON: I think someone is on the phone.

>> KATHY HATCH: One of our participants is on the phone?

>> DARREN LARSON: Yeah, I think so.

>> KATHY HATCH: I think you're right. Folks, could you please make sure to use the \*6 to mute your phone. Don't just put it on hold because that will give music to us, but go ahead and use \*6 to mute your phones. Thank you. I'm not sure that that person has done that yet. In the meantime, did anybody else have any questions for Dot?

>> PARTICIPANT: I do. This is Melody. I'm an advocate in Montana. My question to put on the survey is: Do you ‑‑ Has anybody said how much they suffer from depression because of not being able to be involved in the social networking with friends and family?

>> DOT NARY: That's a good question. Targeting in on the effects of invisitable homes, the real effects on individuals. I think that's a good question.

>> PARTICIPANT: Do you have any statistics about that?

>> DOT NARY: I don't have it because that question has not been asked. There are questions about social isolation but they're not tied to invisitable homes. So that's what we need to work on. This is an aside, but I'm sorry to report, I have been trying to pull it up on my e‑mail, I'm working with someone in the architecture department at KU on some projects like this, and he sent a little blurb from a National Homeowners Association. It was congratulating themselves because they recently defeated some Visitability proposals. So they're really actively trying to not have to build Visitable homes. So we have a lot of work to do. I think it's the National Homeowners Association, and I will try to find that and send it to you, Kathy.

>> KATHY HATCH: Thank you. I would like to put that up on the web site.

>> DOT NARY: We have a lot of work to do.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is Dawn Clinton with the Southeast Center for Independent Living in Kansas. I live in a little rural area, we have no zoning or anything, and it's good if you can get the law passed that when you build a new home you make it accessible, but when you have little towns like this that have no zoning or anything, how is that going to be possible? Or is it ever going to be possible?

>> DOT NARY: This is getting into Darren's area, but there are communities in the U.S. who have passed ordinances. One I'm thinking of is Pima, Arizona, and I think it happens when there're enough people who are affected with it personally or have family members who start to say, “Why are we building homes this old‑fashioned way? They don't meet the needs of our population.” I'm not saying it's easy, but it can be done, and I think Darren is going to address that.

>> DARREN LARSON: If I understand the question, you're saying your town is small enough that there are no zoning laws. Is that correct?

>> PARTICIPANT: Yes, that's correct. We have no zoning of any kind here in Sedane, Kansas.

>> DARREN LARSON: My recommendation is that you talk to the architects and the builders who build the homes in your town and you let them know about Visitability. You can also write a letter in your newspaper if you have one to get the point out there. That's what I would do.

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay. I appreciate it. Thank you.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. Any other questions for Dot?

>> PARTICIPANT: This is David again in Louisville. I thought that I read when I did a search on Visitability that Tucson, Arizona, has over like 11,000 Visitable homes. Is that correct? Does anyone know?

>> DARREN LARSON: That is correct. That's quite an accomplishment that they have their city ordinance that's really cool. It's something we can all model and we can all borrow, and every town can follow.

>> KATHY HATCH: I'm sorry, someone ‑‑ excuse me a second, Darren. Someone is not on mute and there's a lot of background noise going on. They're talking to somebody else. So can you ‑‑ whoever that is, please don't do that, or use your \*6. That would be great. I'm sorry, Darren. Go ahead, now. Thank you.

>> DARREN LARSON: Well, I was done with that comment. But I think that's really cool and something every town should follow.

>> KATHY HATCH: Yes. Okay. I think ‑‑ do we want to move on, then to Darren's presentation now? Sounds good. Okay. I think we're ready for that. Darren, would you like to go ahead?

>> DARREN LARSON: Yeah, and thank you, Dot, so much. Because that really gives us an idea about how powerful the stories and data can be and is. And for me, for me, I grew up in a small town in Montana, and none of my friends' parent’s homes had access. So I wasn't able to go visit someone for birthday parties or dinners. I totally relate to everything that Dot said in her presentation.

It does mean a lot to people, and we know that disability can happen any time. We don't know when that may happen. My mother had no idea she was going to have a child with cerebral palsy, but here I am.

We heard a couple comments about how the Visitability features are good for anybody so everybody can benefit from zero steps, wider hallways or bigger bathrooms. So this goes beyond just the disability community, and this is for anybody. So Dot really shared some great stories why this is necessary, why this is needed.

So now let's talk about policy and what we can do in our towns and in our states to make sure that more Visitable homes are being built.

First of all, we need to know what the laws currently say. Currently, the Fair Housing Act requires minimum access for ground‑level access to residences. This is for multi-access buildings with 4 units or more. So currently there's no federal law that requires single‑family homes, duplexes, triplexes or town homes to have basic accessible design. So those are really the group of homes that we are talking about, the ones that fall beneath the Fair Housing Act.

So how do we make this happen? How we do it in Montana is to get the community the message and then start developing relationships. One way that you can get this in your community, and we did it this year in Montana, one of the ways is you can develop a Housing Task Force to advocate for Visitability design. What you're going to do is you're going to build a partnership. You're going to identify the players and you're going to identify the CILs and other disability agencies in your community, and you can ask the people there who wants to advocate for Visitability.

And then once you get a group of advocates to work on this, then you set a time during the month to meet. And you make a plan. Are you going to educate? Are you going to do policy change? Or are you going to do both?

In the example here in Montana, we set every third Thursday of the month. That set time creates consistency and momentum. So everybody knows on the third Thursday of the month at 10:00am the Housing Task Force is going to meet and talk about priorities and goals and progress. You have a set time to do that.

So in Montana we talk about how we might need to educate and do policy change and wanting to do both. Obviously, the education piece comes first. So what you want to do, you want to engage the stakeholders in your area and sell the message of Visitability and why it's needed. So you educate the stakeholders, and the stakeholders are architects, builders, developers, Realtors, city officials, state officials, legislators. And then the general public.

And so where do you find these people? Where are they? Where do you locate these people, these stakeholders? Well, you can go to **trade shows**. I know architects and builders, construction folks, they're always at trade shows in towns and cities, and that's a good opportunity to share in a Visitability booth to share the message.

Another place is at **conferences**. State officials in your housing, city officials, they have conferences to talk about their goals and their priorities and concerns, and a lot of these conferences are open to the public. Or if not, you can get in by creating a relationship with a state official. So conferences.

Another one is **staff and community meetings**, **legislative policy days**. I know in Montana every year we have a **housing day** where they gather and they have booths and talk about construction. It's a good opportunity to sell the Visitability message.

And then the last one is **media outreach**. As I said before, you can always write a guest editorial in your newspaper or do a TV spot, whether it be a commercial or PSA or on the radio. There's many ways to engage the public stakeholders by using the media. Kathy, maybe we can stop here and let people ask any questions or have any comments.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay. That sounds good. Are there any questions from anybody right now for Darren? Or comments about the things that he has been talking about.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is Dot. I have a question, Darren, and I don't know if this is the right time, but I have been thinking about it. We're seeing a lot of resistance to government and regulation these days. Do you have any sense of how this impacts proposing Visitability legislation, ordinances, whatever?

>> DARREN LARSON: Yeah, and we're going to get to that at the end of my talk. So we'll get there. That's a good question.

>> KATHY HATCH: Any other questions? Darren will answer that one when we get to that part of his presentation.

>> DOT NARY: Sounds good.

>> KATHY HATCH: Anything else?

>> DARREN LARSON: So, if there aren't any questions or comments, we can talk about policy change. We talked about education and how you can get the message out there. And then once you get the message out there in the news and your communities are aware of Visitability and why it's needed, then you can move for policy change.

Policy change is broken down into two areas... the public area and then the private area. And so we're going to talk about the public sector first. And then we'll talk about the private sector.

So the **public sector**: every community, every state is going to have annual Citizen Participation Classes, and they are timed where anybody can go give a comment about housing. You can take advantage of these times.

The first one is the **low‑income housing tax credit** program. Every state has your low‑income housing tax credits, and everyone in these programs has the **Qualified Allocation Plan**. What we call the QAP here in Montana. And every year there's several times to comment and to raise your concerns with the tax credit program. We have done this here in Montana and we have gotten Visitability required in the QAP for all tax credits for properties. So that's one.

>> DARREN LARSON: I know in Montana, the Board of Housing in Montana has three or four times throughout the year to comment on the QAP. So it's very important that you take advantage of this opportunity. So that's number one.

Number two, there are two programs, the **HOME program** and the **Community Development Block Grant** program. **CDBG** is the acronym for that one.

So CDBG is to provide affordable housing for people with disabilities. Every community with 60,000 people or more receives funds to operate a home program and a CDBG program. Those programs are governed by the **Consolidated Plan**. So the Consolidated Plan has an annual citizen participation period for people to voice their concerns or ideas for their home CDBG. So this is another good opportunity to advocate for Visitability within your community or state.

So those are the public sector. Those are homes being built with public funds.

Then we're going to talk about homes being built with **private funds**, and the best way to engage the private sector is to get a city ordinance passed through your City Council. Here in Missoula, we are working on trying to do that, and Dot talked about how there's pushback from builders and the general public. What we have found is that this primarily came from the private sector: people who built their home with their own money and they do not want to be told how to build their home, which I can sympathize with. I'm a Montanan and Montanans do not like regulations. So I understand that.

So how do you communicate the need for Visitability? What we're doing is we are encouraging Visitability for the private sector. We're offering incentives. We hope to offer incentives to the private sector to go through the public sector to build Visitable designs.

Now, this can happen in many ways. It can be a tax credit. It can be when you get your building permit if you agree to build Visitably, your building permit will be moved to the top of the list and you will have a fee reduction in your building permit form. So these ‑‑ there's ways to incentivize it and not require it. So that's what we're doing here in Missoula.

So that's the end of my ‑‑ oh, yeah, one more thing. I need to comment about the gentleman who talked about involving the fire department in these discussions. That is such a great idea! One of the stakeholders on the City Ordinance Committee is going to be a member of the fire department. So that's a good idea to involve the health providers. I totally agree with the notion that it does help in a crisis situation when you have a zero step entrance and you have wider hallways. It does help with that.

So that is the end of my talk, and hopefully you understood most of that. If not, like Kathy said, we have the bullet points on the APRIL web site. So go check out those points. And then if you have other questions, if you find you require a phone call, or e‑mail, I'll be happy to e‑mail back and forth or do a phone call later. Then Kathy can connect us.

>> KATHY HATCH: Well, thank you very much, Darren. I'll also put yours and Dot's e‑mail addresses on the web site if people want to ask you questions or get in touch that way. Okay?

>> DARREN LARSON: Awesome!

>> KATHY HATCH: Are there questions now? Thank you very much, Darren.

>> PARTICIPANT: I have a question.

>> KATHY HATCH: Go ahead.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is Kay Grier in Ohio. Hi, everyone. Darren, back to what you were saying about the QAPs and the Housing Finance Agency. Ohio is just going through that right now, and we we're finding that on our Ohio housing finance QAP they were making good progress in years past and then recently they were starting to kind of back off of some of this stuff. So we wrote a letter on behalf of OSILC and I went to the public hearing and read it and left copies there with them, and I did in fact give them some ideas about set‑aside programs and some of the things that you talked about. So we'll hope that they kind of recommit to getting some of the Visitability features back as requirements in the QAP. So I know that is definitely one way that helps.

>> DARREN LARSON: Sure. Why have they backed away?

>> PARTICIPANT: Good question. I don't know. Maybe we weren't as ‑‑ haven't been as diligent in staying on them as we had been in the past. Greg Kramer, are you on this call? I guess not.

>> PARTICIPANT: Yes, I'm on the call.

>> KATHY HATCH: He's on here somewhere. He may be on mute.

>> PARTICIPANT: No, I'm here.

>> PARTICIPANT: Greg, can you answer that? Why did they back off?

>> PARTICIPANT: Well, it's a twofold question. Probably the biggest thing is the developers from ‑‑ from what I'm hearing, every project has to be made Visitable. The problem that the developers are saying is, “Why do we have to do this if people with disabilities who need it aren't going into those units?” So the second part to that is that the Ohio Housing Finance Agency. We've been advocating with them because they really target low‑income and moderate‑income but don't target extremely low income people such as people that are on SSI. So we’ve got all these units out there that are accessible but they're not affordable.

>> PARTICIPANT: This is Shelby Butler at the CIL in Springfield, Missouri, and I was just wondering if anyone, or if you, Darren, had used the International Codes Type C unit? I know that was something that was implemented, I guess within their code last year, and I've been trying to follow it and didn't know if that was helpful in any states to actually provide some measurements and guidelines and a code that's already there.

>> DARREN LARSON: Yeah, that's a good point. That's a new part of that code. We followed the Type B. I'm drawing a blank as where we got that, but I think it was off of the Fair Housing Act for the multi‑family properties. But, yes ‑‑ but that's a good point.

>> PARTICIPANT: From what I understood, the type C unit is a Visitable unit. So that's why I was asking if anyone had used that or referenced it, because they are calling it a Visitable unit.

>> KATHY HATCH: Is that in the Fair Housing Act, though, or where do you find this Type C unit?

>> PARTICIPANT: It's the International Council Code, I believe. So the code has to be adopted by the city or the whatever, but I just wondered if anyone had been referencing that since they are providing a specific outline of what an apartment would look like.

>> DARREN LARSON: I know here in Montana we are advocating for the bathrooms to be 40 inches by 60 inches and that provides a turning radius for wheelchairs. So if that's the same as the type C unit that you’re talking about, I do not know, but those are the measurements that we have been going by in Montana.

>> PARTICIPANT: David again in Louisville. I was trying to steer towards just new homes being built in Louisville, and maybe some of those incentives that you spoke about would be helpful. I came late to the conference - sorry about that - but what is the web site you mentioned? I really think if it's going to be incentivized that is the only way that the builders and other people will do it, is with a tax break that will help give a break on the building code. I think that's the only way they're going to see any fruition come from that, and what is the web site that I need to look at that on?

>> KATHY HATCH: Darren, do you want to give –

>> DARREN LARSON: Are you talking about my bullet points?

>> PARTICIPANT: Bullet points. Just something that would point out those incentives you talked about. I think it's the only way the builders will do it is if they get something out of it. Unfortunately, as sad as it is, or until people in the disability community, mainly the baby‑boomers start demanding it, and then perhaps that might take place. But right now incentives are the only way I think it's going to take place, unfortunately.

>> DARREN LARSON: So, David, please e‑mail Kathy, and then Kathy will e‑mail your e‑mail to me and then –

>> PARTICIPANT: Okay.

>> KATHY HATCH: I was just going to tell you folks that the whole transcript from today's program will be on the web site. The bullet points are on there now. I'm going to add a few more after we are finished with the call today. So if you go to the APRIL web site in a few days, there will be the transcript. But right now you'll be able to see some of Darren's talking points.

>> DARREN LARSON: And, David, let me say that we are in the middle of developing an ordinance in Missoula. We're in the middle of identifying those possible incentives. So in a couple weeks I'll be able to send you a lot more concrete things to go by. Right now these are ideas that we have talked about. So if you give me an e‑mail, I can send you, or anybody's e‑mail, I can send you guys more possible incentives.

>> PARTICIPANT: Should I just send my e‑mail address to Kathy?

>> KATHY HATCH: You can do that or ‑‑ you can do that or I'll put Darren's e‑mail up on the web site so that you can go directly to him. Okay?

>> PARTICIPANT: That will be perfect. Thanks for your help.

>> KATHY HATCH: Darren, we have another comment here from our chat line. This is from Brian Peters. He said: “I recently did a review of QAP’s across the nation, and one issue I noticed is that a couple of states encourage or mandate Visitability... in multi‑family housing. So my comment is, if your state already has a Visitability requirement in the QAP, make sure it's properly targeted at single‑family housing.

>> DARREN LARSON: Yeah, exactly. It's important that the QAP is clear has those required as well because, like I said at the beginning, the Fair Housing Act only offers minimal accessible requirements. So that's a good point.

>> KATHY HATCH: Okay.

So any other questions? Or comments? In our chat line, anybody there? No? Okay.

Well, I guess we're coming to a close, then. It's about a quarter after 4:00, and I think I would like to first of all thank all of the folks who are here today for joining our IL Conversation. I would like to thank SKIL for doing the audio recording of it. And also to Larry and the CART folks who are doing the captioning for us. Again, I'd like you to visit the APRIL web site. We'll make sure some of these things are up there. Specifically the e‑mail addresses for our presenters and then there are a few more comments from Darren that I'm going to put up there as well.

There also will be a transcript in a few days and just go to [www.APRIL‑rural.org](http://www.APRILrural.org). If you have any questions about today's discussion you can reach me at [kathatch@charter.net](mailto:kathatch@charter.net). So thanks again, everybody.

This IL Conversation is presented by the IL NET which is operated by the Independent Living Research Utilization program at TIRR Memorial Hermann in partnership with NCIL and APRIL. Support was provided by the U.S. Department of Education rehabilitation administration but no official endorsement of the Department of Education should be inferred.

Again, thanks everybody, and we'll hopefully see you next month on another IL Conversation.