Living & Thriving with Person-Centered Supports: Moving Beyond COVID-19

AVENUES SLS

Melanie Miles & Scott Shepard, Avenues Supported Living Services

2020 TASH Conference

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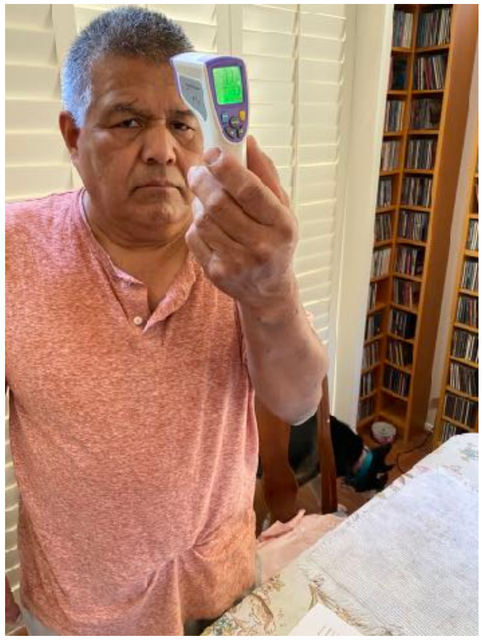
Most people are understandably frustrated by the changes and restrictions in their essential routines, employment and volunteering

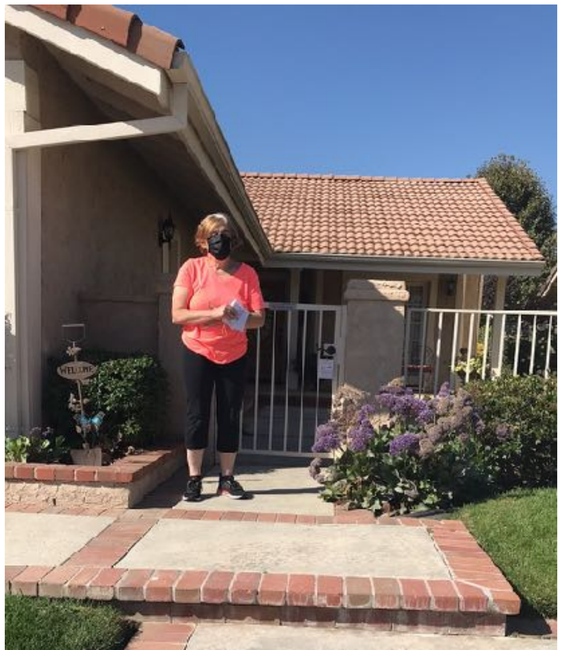


We have seen that people who have been able to keep their essential jobs and routines cope best (after some initial coaching challenges around new safety rules like wearing masks, social distancing, etc.)

Work, Volunteerism and other essential routines continue to be important to and for people, especially people with disabilities

There are no quick fixes, or one-size-fits-all answers. Each person, each team & family have different needs and different levels of comfortability. It is extremely important that each individual, family and team (coaches, teachers, staff) are listened to when collaborating to identify SAFE and RESPONSIBLE ways to assist people to rejoin their essential jobs & routines.

Our question became: HOW do we re-engage people safely & responsibly in their essential routines (that they need and enjoy)?



Lugene

Pre-COVID

Person Centered Zoom Meetings:

We asked people to choose one or two SPECIFIC routines they wanted to re-engage in…and problem solved how they could SAFELY & RESPONSIBLY work with their family & team to achieve those goal(s).

Lugene

Post-COVID

Sharon attended traditional segregated Day Programs for over 50 years. During the pandemic she was frustrated and wanted to know when her program would open up again. We realized this was probably NOT a possibility, but couldn't convince Sharon, until we drove by the old Day Program so she could see it was completely closed down. She gave "notice" to her program and funding source to DC services.

Now, Sharon is excited that she will be starting "new day services" with 1 to 1 person centered supports in the community (similar to the individualized, person-centered supports she receives in her community through SLS). She still wants to be picked up a 9am!

David

David has worked at Ralph's supermarket for 14 years as a Courtesy Clerk. Changes have always been difficult for him. In mid-March, David's Supported Employment agency notified him that they were discontinuing his in-person (direct) services and job-coaching supports effective immediately.
David was predictably panicked, having relied on weekly on site coaching services throughout his employment there

Instead of needing less support, David required MORE in order to hold onto his long-term job serving his local community. How to wear a mask & gloves and learning to socially distance took LOTS of Coaching

Avenues SLS needed to step in and provide DAILY job coaching Because in-person services were essential for David

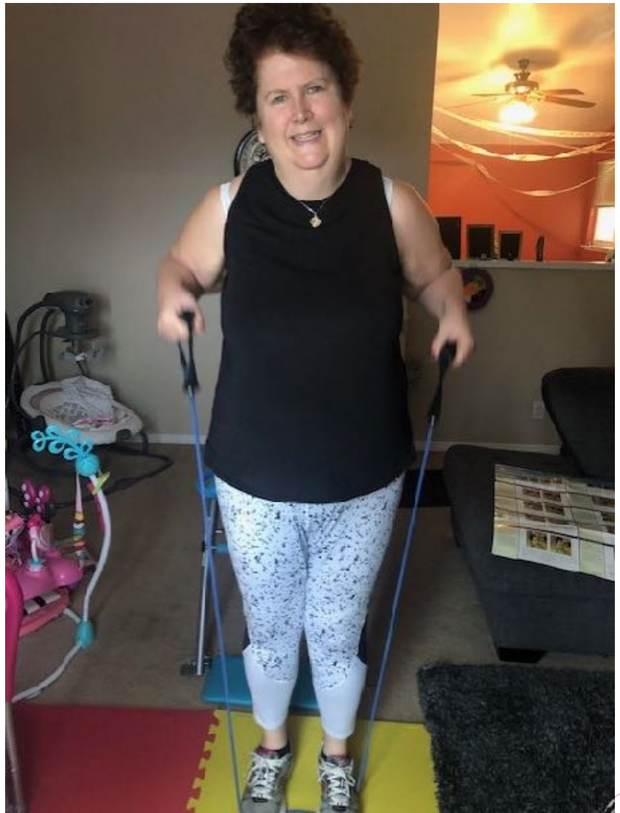
Avenues & David determined that Coaches needed to take him to work instead of taking the bus an hour early like he used to. When David couldn't hang out at Starbucks, McDonald's or his workers lounge an hour before work (dining areas were shut down), he began getting anxious and asked to go home early.

Over the past 2 months, David has resumed taking the bus to work

Melanie's Presentation

Melanie Miles 2020 TASH Conference

Sheltering in my house for the first 2 and a half months of the pandemic gave me time to focus in many things, like yoga & pilates



My Keto diet
For breakfast I made two eggs and bacon with pepper and salt
For lunch, I made grilled chicken over spinach leaves.
For the desserts in the picture I made them with no sugar, dark chocolate and butter...and Keto Raspberry Cheesecake!

Here I am doing my arts and crafts making them for my own craft store (I hope to sell them again as a Vendor at Cal-TASH and Craft Faire’s when they open

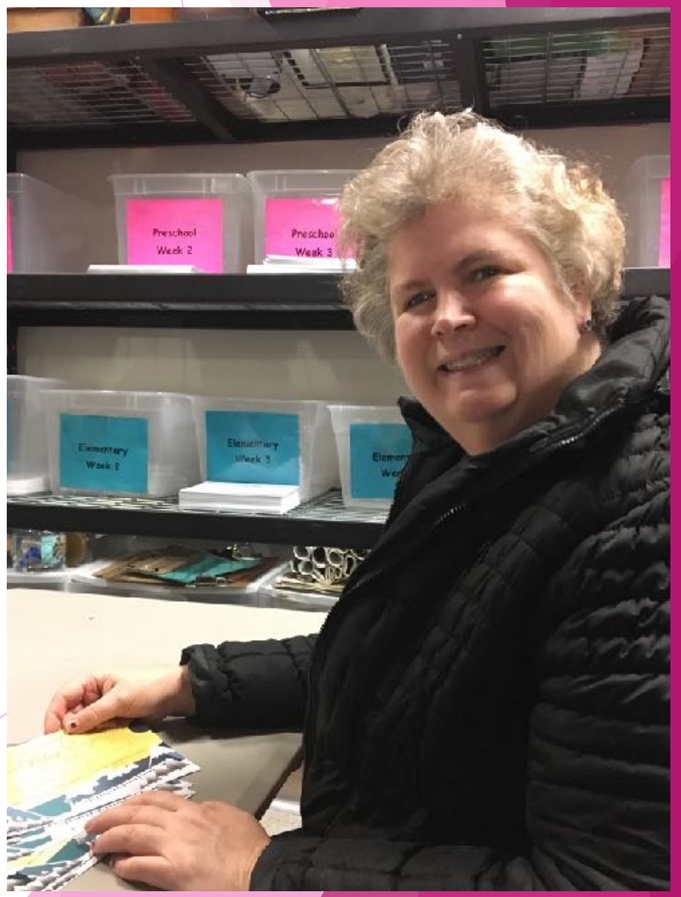
I took lots of walks and practiced social distancing, wearing a mask & sanitizing

But I also missed getting a paycheck and volunteering in my community, shopping and doing things I enjoy, so Avenues coached me how to do these things safely & responsibly

I’ve been back working at the Avenues Office earning a paycheck since June

Variety is important to me (I don’t like working or volunteering at the same places every day), so I found which of my volunteer jobs would let me come back and found some new ones too:

-Real Life Church
-Santa Clarita Grocery (food bank)
-SCV Food Pantry



I attend outdoor church service safely and responsibly

I also took a COVID test to make sure my mom was safe during my Thanksgiving visit

1. What are we pleased about/what has worked well in providing person centered practices in a pandemic world?

We have assisted each person we support to learn and practice safe & responsible habits and skills in their homes and communities

By meeting individually with families and teams, one person/one team at a time, we have been able to assist them to identify essential and meaningful routines and volunteerism, then to provide them with the coaching and supports they need to successfully re-engage in those essential routines.

We have continued to coach & support people in their essential CIE jobs (even while some agencies stopped providing in-person coaching & supports)

2. What lessons have we learned while providing person centered practices in a pandemic world?

Congregate, segregated Day Programs remain closed and will not open back up in the near future (maybe never). Agencies will no longer be able to provide segregated, large-group services. Even if a vaccine comes out in 2021, the HCBS Final Rule will disallow funding for segregated group services... (all State agencies should already have been preparing for this)

California can't and shouldn't continue to double dip/pay 2 agencies simultaneously (one to provide services, and one for absence billing).

For people at home without in-person services, ***segregated zoom classes, phone calls and coloring books aren't enough!*** Having dropped off a tablet to someone at home in the Spring is no longer newsworthy. We MUST work to assist each family & team to build trust and identify safe & responsible ways within their comfort zone to re-engage in their essential routines using individualized, in-person supports, one person at a time.

3. Two years from now, what do we see as the state of the state with supports and services... What will be the same, what will be different?

-The HCBS Rule will be fully implemented.

-People will be working, volunteering, learning, and recreating in their communities safely & responsibly with the personalized/ individualized supports that they need. (Using CIE, PIP, SDP, etc.)

-Services will be integrated, inclusive, and in the community (safely & responsibly); designed with the person's needs in mind, not the program's needs.

For more info:
www.AvenuesSLS.org

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SUPPORTED LIVING SERVICES