

# **Empowering Independence: A Comprehensive Report on LIFTT's Impact Across South and Central Eastern Montana (2022-2023), by Carlos Ramalho, Executive Director, Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow – LIFTT**

## **Abstract**

This report provides a comprehensive analysis of Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT)'s performance during the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years, highlighting the organization's impact across 18 counties in South and Central Eastern Montana. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and Center for Independent Living (CIL), LIFTT is dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities by providing education, support, and opportunities for independent living. The report details the geographic and demographic landscape of the service area, with in-depth profiles of each county's unique needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Key sections explore the range of disabilities LIFTT serves, demographic trends, and the diverse needs of urban and rural communities. The report also includes detailed accounts of services provided, from advocacy and vocational training to assistive technology and peer counseling. LIFTT's achievements are presented through statistical analysis and success stories, showcasing the organization's role in increasing independence, improving access to essential resources, and relocating consumers from institutional to community-based living.

Challenges faced by LIFTT, including resource limitations, geographical barriers, and service gaps, are examined, along with the innovative solutions implemented to overcome them. The conclusion outlines future directions and goals for expanding services, emphasizing the need for ongoing support and collaboration from the Board of Directors to continue meeting the evolving needs of the region. This report serves as both a reflection on past accomplishments and a roadmap for future growth, reinforcing LIFTT's commitment to fostering independence and inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

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# **Empowering Independence: A Comprehensive Report on LIFTT's Impact Across South and Central Eastern Montana (2022-2023)**

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## **I – Introduction**

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This introduction sets the stage for a comprehensive overview of LIFTT's performance in recent fiscal years, highlighting its successes, the challenges it has faced, and the ongoing commitment to enhancing independence for individuals with disabilities across Montana.

### **1.1 Overview of LIFTT as a Montana 501(c)(3) Corporation**

Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) is a nonprofit organization established under the 501(c)(3) status, reflecting its commitment to public service and community empowerment. As a charitable entity, LIFTT operates with a clear vision to support individuals with disabilities across Montana, ensuring they have the resources, tools, and opportunities necessary to lead independent lives. With a focus on comprehensive support and advocacy, LIFTT plays a critical role in Montana's disability rights and services ecosystem, upholding the values of inclusion, accessibility, and empowerment.

### **1.2 Definition of LIFTT's Role as a Center for Independent Living (CIL) with a mission to empower individuals with disabilities**

LIFTT is structured as a Center for Independent Living (CIL), one of the many such centers across the United States dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for individuals with disabilities. The mission of LIFTT is to empower people with disabilities to live independently through education, support, and opportunities. As a CIL, LIFTT prioritizes consumer-driven services, meaning individuals with disabilities lead their care, defining their needs and setting personal goals. LIFTT's approach includes offering a range of services, from advocacy and skills training to assistance with accessing resources and navigating complex systems. This commitment aligns with the nationwide philosophy of independent living, emphasizing choice, control, and autonomy for those LIFTT serves.

### **1.3 Service Coverage: Billings, Glendive, and 18 Counties in South and Central Eastern Montana**

LIFTT operates two primary offices strategically located in Billings and Glendive, Montana. These offices serve as central hubs for delivering services, coordinating outreach, and fostering connections within local communities. LIFTT's service area encompasses 18 counties across South and Central Eastern Montana, a vast and diverse region that includes both urban centers and rural communities. These counties are:

1. **Big Horn**
2. **Carbon**
3. **Carter**
4. **Custer**
5. **Dawson**
6. **Fallon**
7. **Garfield**
8. **Golden Valley**
9. **McCone**
10. **Musselshell**
11. **Powder River**
12. **Prairie**
13. **Richland**
14. **Rosebud**
15. **Stillwater**
16. **Treasure**
17. **Wibaux**
18. **Yellowstone**

Each county presents unique challenges and opportunities for LIFTT's mission, ranging from the needs of an aging population to the complexities of serving Native American communities and rural residents with limited access to healthcare and social services. By maintaining a presence in both Billings, the largest urban center in the region, and Glendive, a critical rural hub, LIFTT effectively reaches a broad demographic, addressing the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

## 1.4 Plans for the Future

Our goal is to open additional offices in the next few years. We are aiming at the Northern Cheyenne and Crow Agency reservations, and cities like Miles City and Glendive.

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## II - Geographical Area Overview

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### 2.1 Description of Service Area

LIFTT serves a broad and diverse region in South and Central Eastern Montana, encompassing 18 counties, each with unique characteristics, demographics, and needs. This vast service area includes both urban centers and remote rural communities, presenting varied challenges and opportunities. Below is a description of each county, highlighting demographics, challenges, and opportunities.

#### 2.1.1 Big Horn County

- a. **Population:** Approximately 13,055, with 20% over 65 and 18% living with a disability.
- b. **Challenges:** Access to culturally sensitive healthcare and services; transportation barriers; economic hardships.
- c. **Opportunities:** Collaboration with tribal governments to establish targeted services and employment opportunities.
- d. **Observations about Big Horn County:** Known for its significant Native American population, particularly from the Crow and Northern Cheyenne tribes. It is a county with a rich cultural heritage and unique needs related to tribal governance, healthcare access, and culturally competent services.



### 2.1.2 Carbon County

- a. **Population:** 10,473, with a notable elderly demographic (24% over 65).
- b. **Challenges:** Supporting safe aging in place with home modifications; limited healthcare facilities in rural areas.
- c. **Opportunities:** Expanding volunteer programs for elder support and leveraging tourism for disability advocacy events.
- d. **Observations about Carbon County:** Predominantly rural, Carbon has a growing elderly population that requires home modifications and aging-in-place resources. The county's economy relies on agriculture and tourism, leading to seasonal fluctuations in demand for services.

### 2.1.3 Carter County

- a. **Population:** 1,415, with a significant portion of residents over 65 (26%).
- b. **Challenges:** Geographic isolation leads to difficulties in accessing services; low population density affects community outreach.
- c. **Opportunities:** Implementing remote support services and telehealth initiatives; developing local peer networks.
- d. **Observations about Carter County:** One of Montana's most sparsely populated counties, Carter's residents often face challenges accessing basic services. The rural nature of the county necessitates creative solutions for outreach and service provision.

### 2.1.4 Custer County

- a. **Population:** 11,402, with 20% over 65 and 16% living with disabilities.

- b. Challenges:** Balancing urban and rural service needs; ensuring accessible transportation.
- c. Opportunities:** Centralized resources in Miles City can act as a hub for rural outreach and service provision.
- d. Observations about Custer County:** Centered around Miles City, a small urban area with a mix of rural and urban needs. The county is a hub for the surrounding rural areas, and its service demands include accessible transportation and healthcare.

### 2.1.5 Yellowstone County

- a. Population:** 164,731, with 16% over 65 and 11% living with a disability.
- b. Challenges:** Addressing urban needs such as accessible housing, diverse employment support, and disability education.
- c. Opportunities:** Expanding partnerships with healthcare providers, educational institutions, and local businesses for inclusive programs.
- d. Observations about Yellowstone County:** As Montana's most populous county, it includes Billings, a major urban center. Yellowstone has diverse needs ranging from disability advocacy and employment support to housing assistance and healthcare navigation.

### 2.1.6 Dawson County

- a. Population:** 8,613, with 22% over 65 and 15% living with a disability.
- b. Challenges:** Rural settings create a need for specialized healthcare; limited transportation options restrict access to services.

- c. **Opportunities:** Expanding telehealth services and increasing community involvement to improve service reach.

### 2.1.7 Fallon County

- a. **Population:** 2,878, with 20% over 65 and 14% living with disabilities.
- b. **Challenges:** Limited healthcare resources and geographic isolation; elderly residents require increased home support.
- c. **Opportunities:** Enhancing home modification services and local volunteer networks for elder care.

### 2.1.8 Garfield County

- a. **Population:** 1,206, with 25% over 65 and 15% living with disabilities.
- b. **Challenges:** Very remote with minimal healthcare access; low population density makes service delivery challenging.
- c. **Opportunities:** Use of telehealth, mobile service units, and local partnerships to provide necessary support.

### 2.1.9 Golden Valley County

- a. **Population:** 821, with 28% over 65 and 16% living with disabilities.
- b. **Challenges:** High percentage of elderly residents with limited local services; need for accessible healthcare.
- c. **Opportunities:** Developing local support groups and enhancing communication with regional healthcare providers for increased outreach.

### **2.1.10 McCone County**

- a. Population:** 1,734, with 22% over 65 and 14% living with disabilities.
- b. Challenges:** Lack of accessible healthcare facilities; transportation challenges for elderly residents.
- c. Opportunities:** Focus on home health care services and telehealth to reach isolated individuals.

### **2.1.11 Musselshell County**

- a. Population:** 4,642, with 23% over 65 and 15% living with a disability.
- b. Challenges:** Geographic dispersion and lack of reliable public transportation; need for accessible housing.
- c. Opportunities:** Increasing transportation services, developing senior living options, and advocating for accessible community resources.

### **2.1.12 Powder River County**

- a. Population:** 1,664, with 25% over 65 and 13% living with disabilities.
- b. Challenges:** Predominantly rural with limited infrastructure; healthcare access is a significant challenge.
- c. Opportunities:** Enhancing rural healthcare support through mobile clinics and telehealth services; strengthening local volunteer networks.

### **2.1.13 Prairie County**

- a. Population:** 1,088, with 28% over 65 and 18% living with disabilities.

- b. Challenges:** Small, dispersed population creates service delivery obstacles; elderly residents need accessible health care and daily support.
- c. Opportunities:** Increasing remote support services and home modification programs; fostering community support through local outreach events.

#### **2.1.14 Richland County**

- a. Population:** 10,803, with 16% over 65 and 11% living with a disability.
- b. Challenges:** Balancing urban and rural needs; demand for accessible housing and employment support.
- c.**
- d. Opportunities:** Collaborating with local businesses to create job opportunities for individuals with disabilities; expanding housing resources for seniors.

#### **2.1.15 Rosebud County**

- a. Population:** 8,329, with 18% over 65 and 14% living with disabilities.
- b. Challenges:** Diverse population with a mix of urban and rural challenges; need for increased healthcare and social support.
- c. Opportunities:** Developing targeted community-based living programs; enhancing access to transportation for rural residents.

#### **2.1.16 Stillwater County**

- a. Population:** 9,139, with 19% over 65 and 12% living with disabilities.

- b. Challenges:** Rural areas have limited healthcare facilities; challenges in accessing specialized care.
- c. Opportunities:** Partnering with regional medical centers to provide specialty care and enhancing local health services through telemedicine.

### **2.1.17 Treasure County**

- a. Population:** 732, with 31% over 65 and 18% living with disabilities.
- b. Challenges:** Very small population with high aging demographic; limited local resources.
- c. Opportunities:** Focus on aging-in-place services and remote health support; fostering peer networks for social support.

### **2.1.18 Wibaux County**

- a. Population:** 991, with 24% over 65 and 17% living with disabilities.
- b. Challenges:** Rural, small-town environment with limited public transportation; difficulty accessing specialized care.
- c. Opportunities:** Developing partnerships with nearby counties for resource sharing and focusing on local community development for accessible services.

## **2.2 Rural vs. Urban Challenges**

LIFTT's service area is characterized by a combination of rural and urban environments, each with its own set of challenges and demands:

### **2.2.1 Rural Challenges**

- a. Access to Services:** Rural counties like Garfield and Prairie face significant difficulties due to limited infrastructure, fewer

healthcare providers, and greater distances to service locations. The lack of public transportation and medical facilities in these regions requires innovative solutions, such as mobile clinics, telehealth, and community-based peer networks.

**b. Outreach and Engagement:** The low population density in counties like Carter and McCone makes traditional outreach challenging. LIFTT addresses this by developing localized community events, increasing the role of local volunteers, and offering remote counseling and support via phone or internet.

**c. Healthcare Access:** Rural areas often lack specialists and accessible facilities, making it difficult for residents to receive comprehensive care. LIFTT works to bridge this gap by advocating for telehealth services and forming partnerships with healthcare providers in nearby urban centers.

### 2.2.2 Urban Challenges

**2.3 Diverse Needs:** In urban areas like Billings (Yellowstone County), LIFTT faces the complexity of serving a diverse population with a broad spectrum of needs. This includes individuals from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnic groups, and a mix of young adults and an aging population.

**2.4 Housing and Employment:** The demand for accessible and affordable housing is a pressing issue in Billings. LIFTT collaborates with local housing authorities to ensure disability-friendly accommodations and provides vocational services to support individuals in entering or re-entering the workforce.

**2.5 Transportation:** Urban centers often have more transportation options, but they are not always accessible. LIFTT advocates for improved public transportation systems and works to educate residents on how to navigate them effectively.

This geographical overview highlights the diversity of LIFTT's service area, reflecting the organization's ability to adapt its services to meet the specific needs of both rural and urban communities across Montana.

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### III - Definitions of Disabilities

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#### 3.3 Explanation of disabilities LIFTT serves, using definitions that align with the data

LIFTT serves a wide range of disabilities, reflecting the diverse needs of individuals in Montana. The organization's goal is to provide targeted support to empower individuals to live independently, regardless of the challenges they face. Below are the primary categories of disabilities that LIFTT addresses, along with data-driven insights from recent fiscal reports to illustrate the prevalence in our service area.

##### 3.1.1 Physical Disabilities: Mobility impairments, chronic conditions, etc.

**a. Definition:** Physical disabilities refer to impairments that limit an individual's physical function or mobility. These can include conditions affecting movement, such as spinal cord injuries, arthritis, or musculoskeletal disorders, as well as chronic illnesses like heart disease, respiratory conditions, or diabetes. LIFTT assists individuals in managing these conditions, often providing support for daily activities, home modifications, and mobility aids.

##### **b. Prevalence in the Service Area:**

**2022:** 92 individuals identified physical impairments as their primary disability, representing a significant portion of those served.

**2023:** A reduction to **80** consumers reporting physical disabilities as the primary challenge was observed, but the presence of multiple disabilities often included physical limitations.



### 3.1.2 Mental/Emotional Disabilities

**a. Definition:** This category includes a wide range of mental health conditions, emotional disorders, and psychological challenges that can impact daily living. Common conditions addressed by LIFTT include anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and other emotional health challenges. The goal is to provide peer counseling, advocacy, and resources to enhance emotional well-being and integration into the community.

**b. Prevalence in the Service Area:**

**2022:** 41 individuals reported mental or emotional disabilities as their primary challenge.

**2023:** 63 consumers identified with mental/emotional disabilities, but many more cases were recorded where these conditions were secondary to other disabilities.

### 3.1.3 Cognitive Disabilities

**a. Definition:** Cognitive disabilities encompass a broad spectrum of intellectual and developmental disorders that affect reasoning, memory, problem-solving, and learning capabilities. These can include developmental delays, intellectual disabilities, learning disorders, and traumatic brain injuries. LIFTT's services focus on skill development, resource access, and educational support to promote independence.

**b. Prevalence in the Service Area:**

**2022:** 24 individuals listed cognitive impairments as their primary disability.

**2023:** Fewer reports of cognitive disabilities as the primary challenge was seen, with 17 individuals noting cognitive conditions, reflecting changes in consumer demographics or reporting practices.

### 3.1.4 Multiple Disabilities

a. **Definition:** Multiple disabilities refer to situations where individuals experience a combination of two or more distinct disabilities, which may include physical, mental/emotional, or cognitive challenges. These complex cases require a multifaceted approach to support, often involving coordinated care, comprehensive IL skills training, and peer support. LIFTT provides individualized assistance to ensure all aspects of their needs are addressed holistically.

b. **Prevalence in the Service Area:**

**2022:** A substantial **505** individuals were identified as having multiple disabilities, highlighting the complexity of needs within the service population.

**2023:** **621** individuals reported multiple disabilities, still indicating a significant portion of the population requires a comprehensive support approach.

### 3.2 Statistics Highlighting Prevalence

In both 2022 and 2023, a considerable number of consumers served by LIFTT had disabilities that overlapped across categories, emphasizing the need for adaptive and individualized support plans.

**3.2.1 Physical Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities** were the most frequently reported categories, indicating the common presence of mobility challenges and chronic health conditions combined with other impairments.

**3.2.2 Mental/Emotional Disabilities** have remained a steady concern, particularly in rural areas where access to mental health services may be limited, requiring innovative outreach and support strategies from LIFTT.

These definitions and statistics underscore the diversity and complexity of the disabilities LIFTT addresses, emphasizing the organization's capacity to adapt its services to a wide array of needs within the Montana community.

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## IV - Consumer Demographics (2022 & 2023)

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This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the demographics of individuals served by LIFTT in the fiscal years 2022 and 2023. By examining key indicators such as total consumers served, age, gender, race, income, employment, and housing, we gain insights into the diverse population supported by LIFTT and the ongoing challenges they face.

### 4.1 Total Consumers Served

LIFTT experienced a shift in the number of consumers served between 2022 and 2023:

**2022:** A total of **677** consumers were served, reflecting a wide-reaching effort to address the needs of individuals with disabilities across the service area.

**2023:** The total number of consumers increased to **801**, indicating a more targeted or refined approach to service delivery, potential changes in funding, or shifts in community needs.

The total consumers served highlights LIFTT's ongoing adaptation to the evolving landscape of disability services, with a potential focus on more intensive and personalized support.

### 4.2 Age Groups

The distribution of consumers by age shows the diversity of individuals served, from young children to elderly residents. Key observations include:

**2022:**

- a. **Under 5 years old: 3** consumers
- b. **Ages 5 - 19: 31** consumers
- c. **Ages 20 - 24: 53** consumers
- d. **Ages 25 - 59: 330** consumers
- e. **60 and Older: 260** consumers

- f. A significant number of consumers were between the ages of 25 and 59, accounting for nearly half of the total population served. This age group often requires support in employment, housing, and independence skills.
- g. There was a notable presence of older adults (60+), emphasizing the need for aging-related services and support.

**2023:**

- a. **Under 5 years old: 3** consumers
- b. **Ages 5 - 19: 60** consumers
- c. **Ages 20 - 24: 64** consumers
- d. **Ages 25 - 59: 372** consumers
- e. **60 and Older: 301** consumers.
- f. The 25-59 age group remained the majority, though the number of older adults served increased, suggesting changes in program focus or consumer outreach.

### **4.3 Gender Distribution**

Gender demographics provide insight into the balance of services provided:

**2022:**

- a. **Female: 370** consumers
- b. **Male: 307** consumers
- c. The gender distribution was fairly balanced, with a slight majority of female consumers, indicating the need for gender-sensitive programming.

**2023:**

- a. **Female: 427** consumers
- b. **Male: 365** consumers
- c. The gender distribution remained similar, with women continuing to represent a slightly higher percentage of those served.

## 4.4 Race and Ethnicity

Understanding racial diversity is crucial for ensuring culturally competent and inclusive service provision:

### 2022:

- a. **White: 536** consumers
- b. **American Indian or Alaska Native: 57** consumers
- c. **Hispanic/Latino: 30** consumers
- d. **Asian: 2** consumers
- e. **Black or African American: 5** consumers
- f. **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander: 5** consumers
- g. **Two or more races: 30** consumers
- h. There was a notable presence of Native American consumers, emphasizing the importance of culturally appropriate services.

### 2023:

- a. **White: 634** consumers
- b. **American Indian or Alaska Native: 64** consumers
- c. **Hispanic/Latino: 45** consumers
- d. **Asian: 4** consumers
- e. **Black or African American: 8** consumers
- f. The racial distribution remained consistent, with an increase in the total number of consumers served but maintaining similar proportions.

## 4.5 Income and Employment Status

Income and employment data shed light on the economic challenges faced by the population:

### 4.4.1 Income Levels (2022):

- a. **\$0 - \$5,000: 208** consumers
- b. **\$5,001 - \$10,000: 111** consumers
- c. **\$10,001 - \$20,000: 159** consumers

- d. A significant portion of consumers had very low incomes, with the majority falling below the \$20,000 mark, highlighting economic vulnerability.

#### 4.4.2 Income Levels (2023):

- a. **\$0 - \$5,000: 258** consumers
- b. **\$5,001 - \$10,000: 123** consumers
- c. **\$10,001 - \$20,000: 200** consumers
- d. The income distribution remained largely similar, with many consumers facing significant financial hardship.

#### 4.4.3 Employment Status:

- a. **2022:** A majority were unemployed or not seeking employment, reflecting the challenges in accessing the workforce. However, a portion managed part-time or supported employment opportunities.
- b. **2023:** There were similar trends, with many consumers struggling with unemployment or underemployment due to various disabilities.

## 4.6 Housing Status

Housing stability is a critical indicator of independence and quality of life:

#### 2022:

- a. **Independent Living: 195** consumers
- b. **Rent - Subsidized: 53** consumers
- c. **Homeless: 52** consumers
- d. **Dependent on Family/Friends: 145** consumers
- e. The data showed that while many lived independently, a considerable number relied on family or faced housing instability.

#### 2023:

- a. **Independent Living: 214** consumers
- b. **Rent - Subsidized: 71** consumers
- c. **Homeless: 53** consumers

- d. Dependent on Family/Friends: 189** consumers
- e.** The 2023 data highlighted a continued need for accessible and affordable housing, with a decrease in homelessness but a rise in dependence on family or friends.

These demographic insights underscore the need for tailored programming, increased economic support, and targeted advocacy to address the barriers faced by individuals with disabilities within the LIFTT service area.

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## **V - Services Provided**

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This section highlights LIFTT’s extensive service delivery and the importance of its core programs in empowering individuals with disabilities. The organization continues to adapt to evolving needs, striving to overcome challenges and fulfill its mission of fostering independence and inclusion across Montana.

LIFTT offers a comprehensive range of services aimed at empowering individuals with disabilities to lead independent lives. These services are designed to address the diverse needs of our community, from advocacy to vocational support, and are critical in helping consumers achieve greater autonomy and integration into society.

### **5.1 Core Services Overview**

LIFTT’s core services are essential in fulfilling the organization’s mission to support individuals with disabilities. Each service area is tailored to address specific challenges faced by the community, ensuring comprehensive support:

- 5.1.1 Advocacy:** LIFTT provides both individual and systemic advocacy, empowering consumers to navigate complex systems like healthcare, education, and public benefits. Advocacy services include direct support, legal guidance, and representation in various scenarios.

- 5.1.2 Assistive Technology:** This service focuses on equipping individuals with tools and devices that enhance daily living and independence. Assistive technology can include mobility aids, communication devices, and home modifications.
- 5.1.3 Counseling:** LIFTT offers counseling services, including peer counseling, to provide emotional and mental health support. This enables individuals to build resilience, manage stress, and address personal challenges in a supportive environment.
- 5.1.4 Housing Assistance:** LIFTT assists consumers in finding accessible, affordable housing and making necessary modifications for safer living environments. This includes navigating rental systems, applying for subsidies, and advocating for accessible housing standards.
- 5.1.5 Independent Living (IL) Skills Training:** LIFTT delivers skills training in areas such as budgeting, cooking, using public transportation, and personal care. These skills are crucial for individuals striving to live independently.
- 5.1.6 Peer Counseling:** Peer counseling is a cornerstone of LIFTT's approach, providing individuals with support from others who have similar experiences. This fosters a sense of community and mutual understanding, promoting self-advocacy and empowerment.
- 5.1.7 Personal Assistance Services:** LIFTT offers personal care support, helping consumers with daily living activities such as hygiene, meal preparation, and medication management. These services are vital for individuals who require assistance with routine tasks.
- 5.1.8 Vocational Services:** LIFTT's vocational services help individuals prepare for and secure employment. This includes resume building, job search assistance, interview coaching, and connecting consumers with Vocational Rehabilitation resources.



## **5.2 Consumer Requests and Service Delivery**

LIFTT tracks consumer requests and fulfills services to ensure that needs are met across the region. Below is a summary of the services requested and delivered in 2022 and 2023:

### **5.2.1 Advocacy/Legal Services:**

**2022:** 191 consumers requested advocacy services, with 146 receiving them.

**2023:** 292 consumers requested advocacy services, and 194 were successfully served, showing an increase in fulfillment, possibly due to resource constraints.

### **5.2.2 Assistive Technology:**

**2022:** 27 consumers requested assistive technology, with 16 receiving it.

**2023:** Only 21 consumers requested assistive technology, but only 10 were served, highlighting the challenges in accessing and funding assistive devices in rural and underserved areas.

### **5.2.3 Information and Referral Services:**

**2022:** An overwhelming 1,621 consumers requested information and referral services, with 1,615 receiving assistance, showcasing LIFTT's strength in providing guidance and resources.

**2023:** 1,897 consumers requested similar services, with 1,870 receiving them, reflecting a consistent focus on providing information and connecting individuals to appropriate resources.

### **5.2.4 Housing, Home Modification, and Shelter Services:**

**2022:** 213 consumers sought assistance with housing, with 127 receiving support for home modifications or finding housing.

**2023: 164** consumers requested similar services, but only **65** were assisted, indicating a gap in meeting the growing housing needs.

#### **5.2.5 Peer Counseling:**

**2022: 144** consumers sought peer counseling, with **120** receiving this support, indicating high demand for peer-related services.

**2023: 559** consumers requested peer counseling, with only **342** receiving it, reflecting both increased demand and potential limitations in staff availability or funding.

### **5.3 Challenges in Fulfilling Requests:**

- a. Limited Access to Assistive Technology:** The data indicates ongoing challenges in providing assistive technology due to funding limitations, availability of equipment, and logistical constraints in rural areas. Efforts to expand partnerships with technology providers and increase grant applications are ongoing.
- b. Housing Availability:** The disparity between requests for housing assistance and the number fulfilled points to a critical shortage of accessible, affordable housing. This highlights the need for stronger advocacy and collaboration with local housing authorities.

### **5.4 Goals and Achievements**

LIFTT tracks consumer goals in various life domains to measure the effectiveness of its services. Goals are set based on individual needs, with progress monitored to ensure meaningful outcomes. Key areas of goal setting include:

#### **5.4.1 Self-Advocacy/Self-Empowerment:**

**2022:** 392 goals were set, with 293 achieved, indicating a strong success rate in empowering individuals to advocate for themselves.

**2023:** 669 goals were set, with 453 achieved and 133 still in progress, reflecting an ongoing effort to build self-advocacy skills.

#### **5.4.2 Communication:**

**2022:** 248 goals related to communication were set, with 202 successfully achieved.

**2023:** 289 communication goals were set, with 206 achieved and 36 still in progress, highlighting the need for continued support in this area.

#### **5.4.3 Vocational Training:**

**2022:** 45 vocational goals were established, with 33 achieved, showing a positive impact on employment readiness.

**2023:** 68 vocational goals were set, with 32 achieved and 21 in progress, indicating a longer-term commitment to vocational development.

#### **5.4.4 Community-Based Living:**

**2022:** 115 goals were set for community-based living, with 69 achieved, supporting LIFTT's commitment to fostering independence.

**2023:** 79 goals were set, with 24 achieved and 33 still in progress, underscoring the complexity of facilitating community living for individuals with multiple disabilities.

#### **5.4.5 Success Rates and Goals Still in Progress:**

The overall data from 2022 and 2023 shows consistent efforts in helping individuals achieve significant life goals. While many goals have been successfully met, a portion remains in progress, particularly in vocational and community-based living areas. These ongoing goals represent LIFTT's dedication to long-term support, recognizing that meaningful change often requires sustained effort over time.

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## **VI - Challenges and Difficulties Faced**

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Throughout the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years, LIFTT encountered various challenges that affected the delivery of services across its extensive service area. Despite these difficulties, the organization has remained committed to its mission, implementing creative solutions and seeking partnerships to overcome obstacles. This section details the primary challenges faced and the solutions LIFTT has put into practice to address them.

### **6.1 Resource Limitations**

#### **6.1.1 Financial Constraints**

Like many nonprofit organizations, LIFTT faces ongoing financial constraints that impact its ability to deliver services at the desired level. Funding gaps affect everything from staff training to the acquisition of assistive technology and home modifications. Limited financial resources have occasionally restricted LIFTT's capacity to serve all those in need, particularly in specialized areas like Mental Restoration and Vocational Training.

#### **6.1.2 Staff Capacity**

Resource limitations also translate to staffing challenges. Recruiting and retaining qualified personnel, especially in rural areas, remains difficult. LIFTT's dedicated staff often manage large caseloads, balancing the

diverse needs of consumers while maintaining high standards of service. These capacity issues can lead to longer wait times for consumers and reduced ability to fulfill service requests comprehensively.

## **6.2 Geographical Barriers**

### **6.2.1 Rural Service Challenges**

LIFTT's service area covers a vast and often rugged geographical landscape, making it difficult to reach rural communities. Counties like Garfield, Carter, and Prairie are characterized by remote locations with limited infrastructure. The lack of public transportation options and the distances between service centers create barriers to accessing support, especially for individuals with mobility impairments.

### **6.2.3 Transportation Difficulties**

Providing accessible transportation is a significant challenge in both urban and rural areas. In remote counties, the absence of reliable transportation options prevents individuals from attending appointments, accessing healthcare, and participating in community activities. In urban centers like Billings, transportation options are more plentiful, but not always fully accessible to those with disabilities, limiting independence and mobility.

### **6.2.3 Access to Assistive Technology**

The rural setting also poses challenges in acquiring and distributing assistive technology. In regions with limited local suppliers, obtaining necessary equipment can involve long wait times and higher costs. This impacts consumers who require mobility aids, communication devices, and other specialized tools essential for independence.

## **6.3 Service Gaps**

### **6.3.1 Unmet Consumer Needs**

Data from 2022 and 2023 indicate areas where LIFTT was unable to fully meet consumer needs. This includes:

### **6.3.2 Mental Restoration Services**

Few consumers were able to access mental restoration services due to funding limitations and the shortage of mental health professionals in rural regions.

### **6.3.3 Assistive Technology**

The availability of assistive technology remains inconsistent. In 2023, only a fraction of those who requested assistive technology received it, highlighting a critical service gap. Limited funding, logistical challenges, and a shortage of specialized staff contribute to this gap, especially in remote areas.

### **6.3.4 Housing and Home Modifications**

While demand for accessible housing and home modifications remains high, LIFTT has faced challenges in securing enough resources to meet this need fully, particularly given the affordable housing crisis and the shortage of accessible housing stock in Montana.

## **6.4 Solutions Implemented**

### **6.4.1 Partnerships and Collaborations with Local Agencies**

To address resource limitations and service gaps, LIFTT has focused on building strong partnerships with local organizations, government agencies, and community groups:

- a. Healthcare Partnerships:** Collaborations with local hospitals and health clinics have improved access to healthcare resources, particularly in rural counties. Telehealth partnerships have been established to reduce the geographical barrier for mental health support.
- b. Educational Collaborations:** LIFTT has worked closely with schools and vocational training centers to enhance education and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities, especially in underserved areas.

- c. Community Networks:** Partnerships with local disability advocacy groups and faith-based organizations have expanded LIFTT's reach into rural areas, helping to create localized peer support networks and volunteer programs.

**6.4.2 Creative Approaches to Advocacy and IL Skills Training:** Faced with challenges in service delivery, LIFTT has adopted innovative strategies to continue providing high-quality support:

- a. Virtual Training and Support:** LIFTT expanded its use of virtual platforms to offer IL skills training and peer counseling. This adaptation allows rural consumers to participate in workshops, receive training, and access peer support without the need for travel.
- b. Mobile Outreach:** Recognizing the need to bridge the urban-rural divide, LIFTT launched mobile outreach initiatives, bringing critical services directly to remote communities. This includes mobile assistive technology demonstrations, skills training sessions, and health screenings.
- c. Empowerment through Education:** LIFTT has increased its focus on self-advocacy and empowerment education, equipping consumers with the skills to navigate complex systems like healthcare, social security, and housing on their own. This strategy helps alleviate some of the demand on staff and resources while fostering greater independence among consumers.

**6.4.3 Innovative Funding Approaches:** To mitigate financial constraints, LIFTT has pursued diverse funding strategies:

- a. Grant Applications:** LIFTT has actively applied for state and federal grants aimed at enhancing disability services and securing assistive technology. Efforts are underway to secure additional funding for rural outreach and mental health initiatives.
- b. Community Fundraising:** LIFTT has engaged local communities through targeted fundraising events, raising awareness and

generating support for specific projects, such as accessible transportation initiatives and home modification programs.

These solutions illustrate LIFTT's adaptive and creative approach to overcoming challenges, ensuring that individuals with disabilities across Montana continue to receive the support they need. Despite the difficulties, LIFTT remains committed to its mission of fostering independence and inclusion, continually seeking ways to enhance service delivery and expand its impact.

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## VII - Achievements and Success Stories

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Over the past two fiscal years, LIFTT has made significant strides in achieving its mission to empower individuals with disabilities. This section highlights key accomplishments, focusing on the measurable outcomes that reflect the organization's impact on the lives of those it serves. Success stories and statistics showcase the dedication of LIFTT's staff and the resilience of its consumers in overcoming obstacles.

### 7.1 Increased Independence

LIFTT has successfully helped consumers achieve greater independence through targeted services, skill development, and consistent support. Below are some of the significant outcomes related to increased self-sufficiency:

#### 7.1.1 Self-Advocacy and Self-Empowerment

**2022:** A total of **392** goals were set by consumers in the area of self-advocacy, with **293** goals achieved. These outcomes demonstrate LIFTT's success in empowering individuals to advocate for themselves in healthcare, education, and other critical areas of life.

**2023:** Consumers set **669** self-advocacy goals, of which 453 were successfully achieved, while **133** remain in progress, showcasing ongoing efforts to build self-confidence and independence.



### 7.1.2 Vocational Training

**2022:** 45 vocational training goals were established, with 33 successfully accomplished, enabling individuals to enter the workforce or secure more stable employment.

**2023:** 68 vocational goals were pursued, with 32 completed and 21 in progress, indicating LIFTT's commitment to long-term employment support despite economic and geographical challenges.

### 7.1.3 Community-Based Living

**2022:** LIFTT helped set 115 goals related to transitioning to community-based living, with 69 achieved by year's end. This included securing accessible housing, acquiring home modifications, and enhancing daily living skills.

**2023:** 79 community-based living goals were set, with 24 achieved and 33 still in progress, reflecting the complexity of transitioning from institutional settings to independent living environments.

These statistics underscore LIFTT's dedication to fostering independence through skills training, empowerment, and comprehensive support, leading to significant lifestyle improvements for consumers.

## 7.2 Improved Access

LIFTT's efforts have led to enhanced access to critical resources, ensuring that individuals with disabilities can participate fully in their communities. Key areas of improved access include transportation, healthcare, and the transition from institutional care to community-based living.

## 7.3 Access to Previously Unavailable Resources

- a. **Transportation:** LIFTT has made concerted efforts to improve transportation options, which are a critical need in rural Montana. In 2022, 15 consumers required access to transportation, with 13

successfully achieving it through LIFTT's support. In 2023, **14** consumers sought transportation assistance, with **10** successfully achieving access and **4** still working towards this goal.

**b. Healthcare Services:** Access to healthcare is a pressing issue for many consumers. In 2022, **218** consumers needed previously unavailable healthcare services, with **203** gaining access through LIFTT's assistance. This trend continued in 2023, where **271** consumers sought healthcare support, with **222** achieving access to necessary medical care and **49** still in progress.

**c. Assistive Devices:** The acquisition of assistive devices is crucial for enhancing independence. In 2022, **35** consumers needed assistive technology, with **28** receiving it, improving their mobility and daily functioning. In 2023, **14** consumers requested assistive technology, with **9** achieving access and **5** continuing to seek appropriate devices.

**d. Success in Relocating Consumers from Institutions to Community-Based Living:**

LIFTT has played a pivotal role in helping consumers transition from institutional care to more integrated, community-based living arrangements. In 2022, **160** consumers set goals related to relocating from institutions, with **159** successfully moving to community-based settings. This high success rate highlights LIFTT's effectiveness in advocating for better living conditions, securing suitable housing, and providing the necessary support for individuals to thrive outside of institutional care.

In 2023, although fewer relocation goals were set (**143**), significant progress was made, with **139** relocations successfully completed and the remaining goals are **3** in active development. This shift reflects LIFTT's ongoing commitment to supporting individuals in maintaining their independence within their communities.

## **7.4 Success in Preventing the Institutionalization of Individuals with Living with Disabilities**

### **7.4.1 Sylvester (Champ) Ervin's Journey**

Champ, a young individual on the CFC/SDPAS program, exemplifies LIFTT's impact on fostering independence. Through consistent support from caregivers and his mother, Champ, at 14 years old, has been able to engage in community activities and develop autonomy in daily living. His story highlights the importance of personal assistance in maintaining a quality life at home and in the community.

### **7.4.2 Peggy's Empowerment through the Grant Application Process**

Peggy, a 76-year-old facing multiple health challenges, worked closely with LIFTT to navigate the complexities of grant applications. Although her initial application for a lift chair was unsuccessful, Peggy gained valuable skills in self-advocacy and learned about various financial aid options. LIFTT's peer counseling support during this journey empowered her to take control of future projects.

### **7.4.3 Kristin H.'s Path to Reunification**

Kristin's story is one of resilience and determination. As a single mother striving to regain custody of her children, Kristin faced challenges related to depression, anxiety, and financial instability. LIFTT provided comprehensive support, from assisting with SNAP benefits to connecting her with employment opportunities. Her progress towards family reunification, culminating in a successful in-home visit, underscores the impact of LIFTT's holistic services.

These achievements and success stories demonstrate LIFTT's ability to make a tangible difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities, fostering greater independence, access to essential resources, and a higher quality of life for the communities it serves.

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## VIII - Detailed County-by-County Report

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LIFTT's services span a diverse and vast geographic area, with unique challenges and achievements in each county. This section provides a county-by-county analysis, focusing on the most notable successes and obstacles faced in delivering services to Montana's urban and rural communities.

### 8.1 Yellowstone County

#### 8.1.1 Overview

As the most populous county in Montana, Yellowstone County includes Billings, the state's largest urban center. The county has a diverse demographic with a broad spectrum of needs ranging from accessible housing to specialized healthcare services. Yellowstone represents the core of LIFTT's urban outreach efforts, and the organization maintains a strong presence here to meet the dynamic demands of the community.

#### 8.1.2 Challenges

- a. **Urban Needs:** The urban environment in Billings presents both opportunities and challenges. While access to resources like healthcare and public transportation is more readily available, the quality of these services varies in terms of accessibility for individuals with disabilities.
- b. **Housing:** A significant issue in Yellowstone is the shortage of affordable and accessible housing, especially for low-income individuals with disabilities.
- c. **Employment Opportunities:** Many individuals require tailored support to navigate Billings' competitive job market, which can be difficult for those with limited vocational skills or experience.

### 8.1.3 Achievements

- a. **High Service Reach:** In 2022, LIFTT served **314** consumers in Yellowstone County, reflecting the highest engagement in the region. This included success stories in vocational training, self-advocacy, and community integration, showcasing LIFTT's ability to make a meaningful impact in an urban setting.
- b. **Vocational Success:** LIFTT facilitated numerous employment training sessions, leading to several consumers securing competitive, full-time employment in Billings, including success in specialized fields and administrative roles.

### 8.1.4 Key Success Story

- a. **Michael H.'s Urban Transition:** Michael, a veteran dealing with heart disease and PTSD, transitioned to Billings from Missoula, relying on LIFTT for assistance with navigating local Social Security benefits and finding more affordable car insurance. LIFTT's staff provided peer counseling and employment guidance, significantly improving his quality of life in an urban setting.

## 8.2 Dawson County

### 8.2.1 Overview

Dawson County, with Glendive as its primary town, is a critical rural hub in LIFTT's service area. The county has shown high engagement with LIFTT, demonstrating the importance of maintaining a strong presence in rural Montana. The needs in Dawson County often revolve around accessing healthcare, securing housing, and finding employment.

### 8.2.2 Challenges

- a. **Healthcare Access:** While Glendive serves as a regional healthcare center, many individuals in Dawson County still face difficulties accessing specialized medical care, particularly those living in outlying rural areas.

- b. Transportation:** Reliable and accessible transportation remains a persistent issue, limiting residents' ability to attend appointments, access services, and engage in community activities.
- c. Support for Aging Population:** Dawson County has a higher proportion of elderly residents who require aging-in-place support, home modifications, and assistance with daily living tasks.

### 8.2.3 Achievements

- a. High Consumer Engagement:** In 2022, LIFTT served **206** consumers in Dawson County, highlighting its strong impact in this rural area. Many individuals benefited from LIFTT's efforts in housing assistance, peer counseling, and self-advocacy training.
- b. Successful Housing Modifications:** LIFTT coordinated several home modification projects, enhancing accessibility for elderly residents and those with physical disabilities, allowing them to remain in their homes longer and live independently.

### 8.2.4 Key Success Story

- a. Sylvester (Champ) Ervin's Rural Success:** Champ's story is a prime example of LIFTT's effective work in Dawson County. As a young individual with multiple needs, Champ has thrived at home with the support of his caregivers and mother. LIFTT's involvement ensured he received consistent, high-quality personal assistance, enabling him to participate more fully in community life.

## 8.3 Smaller Counties: Prairie, Golden Valley, and Others

### 8.3.1 Overview

Montana's smaller counties, such as Prairie and Golden Valley, represent some of the most underserved and geographically isolated areas within LIFTT's service region. These counties often have sparse populations, making outreach challenging but essential for those who rely on LIFTT's support.

### 8.3.2 Challenges

- a. **Geographic Isolation:** Counties like Prairie (population 1,088) and Golden Valley (population 821) face significant geographic barriers, with limited public transportation and access to specialized services. Many residents live far from central service hubs, requiring innovative outreach efforts.
- b. **Service Awareness:** In remote areas, awareness of available resources can be low. Many residents may not be aware of the full spectrum of services LIFTT provides, limiting initial engagement.
- c. **Healthcare Shortages:** Smaller counties often lack healthcare providers and facilities equipped to address complex disabilities, forcing residents to travel significant distances for basic services.

### 8.3.3 Achievements

- a. **Localized Peer Support Networks:** LIFTT has made strides in establishing local peer support groups, empowering residents to share experiences, advocate for themselves, and foster a sense of community.
- b. **Mobile Outreach Success:** LIFTT has launched mobile outreach initiatives to bring services directly to residents in smaller counties. This includes providing IL skills training workshops, home accessibility assessments, and counseling sessions in local community centers.

### 8.3.4 Key Success Stories

- a. **David D.'s Path to Self-Improvement in Prairie County:** David, a 41-year-old from Prairie County with a learning disability and mental health challenges, connected with LIFTT to improve his communication skills. Through advocacy and support, David learned to navigate complex social situations and began vocational training with the help of LIFTT staff.
- b. **Gordon G.'s Contribution to the Community in Golden Valley:** Gordon, an 85-year-old with a circulatory condition, sought LIFTT's

guidance on property tax assistance. His story reflects the broader impact of LIFTT's educational outreach, as Gordon now plans to offer workshops on meat processing—a valuable skill in rural Montana.

These county-specific narratives emphasize LIFTT's ability to adapt its services to meet the diverse needs of both urban and rural communities, demonstrating the organization's commitment to fostering independence and inclusion across Montana.

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## **IX - Conclusion and Future Directions**

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### **9.1 Summary of LIFTT's Impact Over the Two Fiscal Years**

Over the 2022 and 2023 fiscal years, LIFTT has demonstrated a profound impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities across South and Central Eastern Montana. The organization's efforts have led to increased independence for hundreds of consumers, providing critical support in areas such as self-advocacy, vocational training, and community-based living. The statistics and success stories presented throughout this report highlight LIFTT's commitment to fostering empowerment, improving access to essential services, and overcoming significant barriers, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Through innovative service delivery and creative problem-solving, LIFTT has successfully:

- a.** Assisted individuals in achieving self-advocacy goals, fostering confidence, and equipping them with the skills to navigate complex systems independently.
- b.** Supported consumers in their journey toward community-based living, with a focus on securing accessible housing and providing IL skills training for long-term independence.



- c. Enhanced access to healthcare, transportation, and assistive technology, ensuring that individuals can fully participate in their communities and pursue their personal and professional goals.

Despite the challenges of limited resources, geographic isolation, and service gaps, LIFTT's dedication to its mission has resulted in measurable achievements, making a tangible difference in the quality of life for the individuals it serves.

## **9.2 Goals for Future Improvements**

Based on the challenges identified throughout the report, LIFTT is setting ambitious goals for the coming years to ensure even greater impact and expanded service capacity:

### **9.2.1 Address Resource Limitations**

- 1) Increase Funding:** Seek additional grants, expand community fundraising efforts, and explore partnerships with private foundations to secure the financial resources needed for service expansion, particularly in underserved areas.
- 2) Expand Staff Capacity:** Focus on recruitment and retention strategies to build a larger, more diverse, and well-trained staff that can handle the increasing complexity of consumer needs. This includes offering professional development opportunities to existing staff to enhance skills in specialized areas such as assistive technology and mental health support.
- 3) Overcome Geographic Barriers:**
  - 3.1) Enhance Transportation Access:** Continue advocating for improved public transportation in rural areas and urban centers, including pursuing partnerships with transportation agencies to increase the availability of accessible vehicles.
  - 3.2) Expand Mobile Outreach:** Build on the success of mobile outreach programs by investing in additional resources for mobile service delivery, ensuring that

remote communities can access support without the need for long-distance travel.

#### **4) Fill Service Gaps:**

- 4.1) Mental Health and Restoration Services:** Focus on building partnerships with local mental health providers to increase the availability of counseling and mental restoration services in rural and underserved counties.
- 4.2) Assistive Technology Access:** Explore opportunities to collaborate with assistive technology suppliers and manufacturers, ensuring that more consumers can access the devices they need. This includes applying for targeted grants and creating a loan program for assistive devices to support consumers while they await funding.

#### **5) Strengthen Advocacy and Consumer Education:**

- 5.1) Increase Peer Support and IL Training:** Invest in expanding peer support networks and enhancing IL skills training, with a focus on rural counties where isolation and lack of resources are most acute.
- 5.2) Empower Self-Advocates:** Continue to emphasize consumer education, equipping individuals with the tools to advocate for themselves in areas such as housing, employment, and healthcare.

#### **6) Call for Support from the Board for Ongoing and Future Initiatives**

As LIFTT moves forward, the support of the Board of Directors will be instrumental in achieving the organization's future goals. We call on the Board to:

- 6.1) Advocate for Increased Funding:** Your advocacy in securing additional funding is crucial to overcoming financial limitations. Support LIFTT's efforts to apply for

state and federal grants, engage with private donors, and pursue innovative fundraising initiatives to meet the growing needs of our consumers.

- 6.2) Support Staff Development:** Investing in staff capacity is essential to LIFTT’s success. We request the Board’s commitment to prioritizing professional development, offering competitive compensation packages, and expanding our staff to meet the diverse needs of our service area.
  
- 6.3) Champion Rural Outreach Initiatives:** LIFTT’s effectiveness in rural communities relies heavily on creative outreach strategies. The Board’s backing in expanding mobile services, advocating for better transportation, and developing local partnerships will be pivotal in reaching isolated populations.
  
- 6.4) Promote Organizational Growth and Innovation:** As LIFTT continues to grow and adapt, we need the Board’s encouragement to explore new service models, embrace innovative technologies, and take calculated risks in program development to better serve our community.

By working together, we can build on the successes of the past two years, address the challenges we face, and create a future where individuals with disabilities in Montana are empowered to live independently, inclusively, and with dignity. Your support will ensure that LIFTT continues to be a beacon of hope and a trusted resource for the communities we serve. This conclusion marks the beginning of a new chapter in LIFTT’s journey, one that promises greater independence, expanded services, and stronger partnerships with the communities we proudly support.

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## **X - Success Stories**

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### **10.1 Sylvester (Champ) Ervin's Journey to Greater Independence**

Champ, a 14-year-old participant in the CFC/SDPAS program, has received consistent support from multiple caregivers, including his dedicated mother. His care includes assistance with bathing, dressing, hygiene, mobility, meal preparation, and community activities. Thanks to the 46 hours of bi-weekly support he receives, Champ has been able to experience greater independence, engaging in activities outside his home and dining out with friends. This support has significantly improved Champ's quality of life and ability to participate in the community.

### **10.2 Peggy's Grant Application Experience**

Peggy, a 76-year-old woman living alone, sought assistance to obtain a lift chair to accommodate her COPD and other health challenges. Working with Erin, her IL Specialist, Peggy completed a grant application for the necessary funds. Although the grant was not awarded, Peggy learned valuable skills in navigating grant processes and remains empowered to pursue other opportunities in the future, thanks to consistent peer counseling and support.

### **10.3 Kristin H.'s Path to Family Reunification**

Kristin, a 33-year-old single mother of four, sought LIFTT's support during a challenging period in her life. Facing depression, financial instability, and the loss of custody of her children, Kristin received assistance with SNAP benefits, employment search, and navigating local resources. She secured a job and recently completed a successful in-home visit with her children, a major step toward reunification. Kristin's journey is a testament to the impact of holistic support and resilience.

### **10.4 David D.'s Improved Communication Skills**

David, a 41-year-old resident of Prairie County, struggles with a learning disability and mental health conditions. He turned to LIFTT for guidance on

improving communication with his coworkers. Through coaching from his IL Specialist, David learned strategies for managing workplace interactions, boosting his confidence and ability to remain calm under pressure. He was also referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for additional support in securing stable employment.

### **10.5 Michael H.'s Transition to a New Community**

Michael, a 56-year-old veteran with heart disease and PTSD, relocated from Missoula to Glendive and needed assistance adjusting to his new community. LIFTT staff helped him navigate Social Security overpayment issues and secure affordable car insurance, while providing consistent peer counseling. Michael also worked with LIFTT to reconnect with his estranged daughter, a significant personal achievement.

### **10.6 Joan L.'s Caregiver Journey**

Joan, a 63-year-old grandmother, takes care of her grandson, Robert, while managing her own back injuries and visual impairments. She sought assistance from LIFTT to reapply for SNAP and Medicaid benefits, which were essential for covering her grandson's medical needs. With guidance from her IL Specialist, Joan successfully navigated the online application processes and secured the necessary support, allowing her to continue caregiving.

### **10.7 Gordon G.'s Contribution to the Community**

Gordon, an 85-year-old resident of Golden Valley, needed help with property tax assistance after relocating to Montana. With guidance from LIFTT, he successfully applied for assistance and was inspired to contribute back to his community by offering meat processing workshops. His story highlights the importance of knowledge-sharing and the impact of localized support in rural areas.

### **10.8 Lori C.'s Empowerment through Communication**

Lori, a 56-year-old woman from Glendive, deals with multiple health conditions, including a neuromuscular disorder and PTSD. With the help of her IL Specialist, Lori learned to communicate effectively with local agencies and navigate complex bureaucratic systems. She received

regular peer counseling, which provided emotional support and guidance, enhancing her ability to advocate for herself.

### **10.9 Dorian's Journey from Homelessness**

Dorian, a 37-year-old male struggling with anxiety, bipolar disorder, and homelessness, connected with LIFTT to improve his situation. With the support of an IL Specialist, Dorian learned to communicate with local aid agencies and gained access to essential resources. His story is a powerful example of the potential for transformation with the right guidance and support.

### **10.10 Clarissa's Recovery and Advocacy**

Clarissa, a 27-year-old woman recovering from addiction, sought LIFTT's help to apply for Social Security benefits. She received guidance from an IL Specialist who assisted her through the paperwork and provided consistent peer counseling. Clarissa's success in navigating the benefits system and building a stable life is a testament to her perseverance and the supportive role of LIFTT.

### **10.11 Shannon's Path to Stability**

Shannon, a 51-year-old man with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and diabetes, was homeless after being released from jail. LIFTT helped Shannon restart his Social Security benefits and reactivate his Medicaid, providing him with a stable foundation to rebuild his life. With consistent support from LIFTT, Shannon successfully navigated the complex systems that were barriers to his independence.

### **10.12 Kristin H.'s Employment and Dental Success**

Kristin, dealing with depression and financial instability, was determined to regain her footing. With LIFTT's assistance, she found employment, accessed dental care through a grant, and navigated government benefits. Her IL Specialist provided a wealth of resources, guiding her step-by-step through the complex processes, resulting in significant strides toward stability and health.

### **10.13 Jenifer W.'s Medicaid and SNAP Achievement**

Jenifer, a 40-year-old woman managing multiple health conditions, reached out to LIFTT for help applying for Medicaid and SNAP benefits. Her IL Specialist guided her through the application processes, teaching her to navigate complex websites and systems. With this newfound knowledge, Jenifer can now confidently manage her benefits independently.

### **10.14 William W. (Junior)'s Path to Education and Support**

William, known as Junior, is a 51-year-old man who recently moved back to Glendive. Facing depression and a history of substance abuse, Junior turned to LIFTT for assistance with benefits and educational resources. With guidance from his IL Specialist, Junior applied for SNAP and Medicaid and was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation, putting him on the path to pursuing further education.

These stories collectively reflect the resilience and determination of LIFTT's consumers and the organization's ongoing commitment to empowering individuals to achieve greater independence and quality of life. Each success is a reminder of the transformative power of personalized support, advocacy, and community-based resources in fostering meaningful change for individuals with disabilities.