



Connecting Communities: How LIFTT's Information and Referral Services Empower Independent Living

At LIFTT, we believe that *information is independence*. Every day, our staff help Montanans with disabilities and those who are aging discover pathways toward autonomy, stability, and inclusion. This philosophy drives our Information and Referral (I&R) services: the heart of how we connect people with the resources that can transform daily life.

In simple terms, I&R means providing accurate, up-to-date, and accessible information about services that promote independent living. But for LIFTT, it's more than that. We act as a liaison and curator of knowledge, bridging consumers and the complex network of agencies, nonprofits, and programs that serve our communities. From our offices and outreach events across 18 counties in South and Central Eastern Montana, our Independent Living Specialists deliver personalized guidance through in-person visits, phone calls, emails, and online conversations.

Because every person's needs are different, we make sure our information is available in multiple accessible formats, such as large print, plain language, screen-reader-friendly electronic files, captioned calls, and interpreter support. Accessibility is not a feature; it is our foundation.

During the past year, the LIFTT team responded to hundreds of requests for information on vital topics such as:

- 1)** Applying for Social Security benefits (SSI, SSDI, and appeals)
- 2)** Navigating Medicaid, SNAP, TANF, and other assistance programs
- 3)** Finding safe and accessible housing
- 4)** Locating food banks and nutrition supports
- 5)** Securing home modifications and adaptive equipment
- 6)** Coordinating transportation options across rural counties
- 7)** Connecting with the Montana Telecommunications Access Program (MTAP) for captioned phones
- 8)** Exploring resources for individuals who are Blind or Low Vision
- 9)** Accessing Personal Care Assistant and Self-Directed Home Care services
- 10)** Understanding IEPs, 504 Plans, and youth transition supports
- 11)** Referrals to MonTECH for assistive technology
- 12)** Guidance on vocational rehabilitation and employment
- 13)** Mental health and suicide-prevention resources
- 14)** Legal advocacy through Disability Rights Montana
- 15)** Aging and veterans' services through ADRCs and Area Agencies on Aging

Beyond providing these connections, we continually expand our outreach in creative ways. This year, LIFTT launched one of its most exciting initiatives yet: a weekly community television show. Recorded locally and shared across regional networks, each episode features a guest, sometimes a

service provider, sometimes a government partner, and often a consumer, who shares insights about a specific program or resource that supports independence. Whether discussing accessible housing, mental-health supports, or assistive technology, the show makes complex systems visible and understandable to everyone, including those without reliable internet access.

By combining traditional information services with innovative media and digital outreach, LIFTT ensures that knowledge travels as widely as need does. Every referral, every call, and every television segment carries the same message: *You have options. You have support. You can live independently.*

LIFTT's Team
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