



Commit to Connect Office Hours: Resource Recap

Topic: Social Connection and Engaging People with Disabilities in Rural Communities

Brief Overview:

Commit to Connect recorded an Office Hours on September 3, 2025, on the topic of social connection and engaging people with disabilities in rural communities. Office Hours are in-depth interviews and virtual forums with a subject matter expert for anyone interested in best practices and strategies for improving social connections.

This Office Hours features Kryss Standlee, the Research Project Director at the Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities grant. She holds a Ph.D. in Experimental Psychology and a M.S. in Community Health and Prevention Sciences. The Office Hours is moderated by Katie Clark Wheeler, Policy Analyst at the Administration for Community Living (ACL). During the session, Kryss shared information on the core mission of University of Montana's Research and Training center (RTC) and key research areas around social connection and disability. Kryss also covered the following topics.

- Barriers that older adults and people with disabilities face in rural communities to meet their social connection needs
- Key considerations that should be taken when developing programs on social connection for and serving rural people with disabilities
- Findings and strategies from the "Peer Collective" intervention
- Best practices that community-based organizations can use to replicate similar interventions in their own communities

This document provides a list of resources shared during the Social Connection and Engaging People with Disabilities in Rural Communities Office Hours.

Resources:

- Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities website (<https://www.umt.edu/rural-institute/>)- Provides information on the Rural Institute including the mission and programs offered.
- RTC:Rural website (<https://www.umt.edu/rural-disability-research/>)- Details the work of the RTC as leaders of rural disability research.
- RTC:Rural eNewsletter sign-up (<https://www.umt.edu/rural-disability-research/enews/default.php>)
- Social media:
 - Instagram: [rtcrural_at_um](#)

- Linktree (https://linktr.ee/rtrcrural_at_um)- Provides a variety of links to resources around rural disability in plain language.
- Peer Collective website (<https://peercollective.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/>)- This site contains the Peer Collective course with guides on facilitating sessions.
- Healthy Community Living website (<https://healthycommunityliving.com/hcl/>)- This website houses trainings for organizations and individuals looking to support people with disabilities in their community to thrive; this is where the Peer Collective will be available as a training in 2026.

Commit to Connect Resources:

- Join the [Nationwide Network of Champions](#) and connect with peers across the country interested in addressing social isolation and loneliness. This free virtual platform hosts an open forum where leaders can engage in discussions, share resources, and find events related to social connection.
- The [Innovations Hub](#) is a public-facing clearinghouse of more than 100 model programs focused on social connection across the U.S., including many nutrition programs.