

Strength on a Shoestring

When it comes to delivering the care families need, dedication trumps dollars—but for how long?

For the past eight years, Independent Community Living (ICL) in Midland has been providing high-quality, in-home services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It's a unique organization with a well-trained, passionate team.

"It's difficult to describe how rewarding it is to just help people accomplish things other people take for granted," says ICL Direct Care Worker Misty Evans. "When you walk in and someone lights up because you're there to help them and not just do *for* them, but do *with* them—there's not a lot of jobs you get that kind of satisfaction from, and that's what keeps me doing it."



But Misty is a realist when it comes to her finances. "You really can't make ends meet without overtime," she says. "You can't do it with 40 hours. You simply can't. You either have to have a side gig or work a bunch of overtime. That's just all there is to it."

This, of course, puts ICL and its peer agencies in a tough position.

"Well, our big struggle right now is the \$2.00/hour increase the state has given us," says ICL founder and executive director Sarah Hubble. "By giving it to us so sporadically and with all these different end dates, it's really caused an issue in our agency. We don't know what our budget is going to look like. And our overtime expenses have doubled because the system has not compensated for the idea that there might be overtime on that \$2.00 an hour. Or that there were holidays."

Sarah describes the overtime and holiday issues as the biggest threats to ICL's solvency. "The math is not working for us," she says. "You have the overtime, the holiday pay, plus the employer share of FICA and all the other expenses we have to pay for that employee...and you're still only getting the \$2.00 extra."

As ICL works to ensure fair compensation for all its team members, they are grateful for every additional penny. "We actually got the PPP grant, and were super stoked about that," Sarah says. "We were like, 'Oh my gosh, this is a blessing for us.' We use our line of credit almost every payroll right now."

And just as ICL makes it work, so do its team members. "We make it work because we want to," says Direct Care Worker Erin Sorensen. "I'm a single mom of a seven year old and we do live very lightly but I wouldn't have it any other way. I like showing my son what I do and what's important to me. I couldn't see myself doing anything else so we make it work."