

CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING BASIC FACTS

How are CILs Directed?

The structure of each Center for Independent Living (CIL) can be very different. However, all CILs must follow a consumer-driven model. This means that the people making decisions about the policies and services are people with disabilities/consumers. At least 51% of the members of a CIL Board of Directors or other policy making body must be people with disabilities. At least 51% of the staff of CILs must also be people with disabilities.

The following is the most typical structure for a CIL:

Board of Directors: This group sets policy, and hires/manages the Executive Director or person in charge of day-to-day operations. Most have individual committees to deal with things like services, finances, personnel, etc. The Board of Directors hold regular meetings.

Executive Director or Program Manager: This individual is hired and managed by the Board of Directors. He/she is responsible to hire and manage the CIL staff, oversee day-to-day operations and make sure the CIL follows the policies approved by the Board of Directors.

Are there any standards for CILs?

Other than general non-profit requirements, and requirements of its grantors, if a CIL receives its funds through the Rehabilitation Act's Independent Living Program, the CIL must then be compliant with federal grant management standards, as well as Standards and Assurances from Section 725 of the Rehabilitation Act, which include the following standard philosophy:

The center shall promote and practice the independent living philosophy of--

- (A) consumer control of the center regarding decision-making, service delivery, management, and establishment of the policy and direction of the center;
- (B) self-help and self-advocacy;
- (C) development of peer relationships and peer role models; and

- (D) equal access of individuals with significant disabilities to society and to all services, programs, activities, resources, and facilities, whether public or private and regardless of the funding source.

Who determines if a CIL is compliant with federal standards?

Private grantors may review a CIL's operations to determine if funds provided by the grantor are being used according to grant requirements. However, if a CIL receives funding through the Rehabilitation Act's Independent Living Program, either a federal or state agency (depending on the source of the grant) will periodically review the operations of the CIL for compliance with the Rehabilitation Act's Section 725 Standards & Assurances.

- When an IL program grant is awarded to the CIL directly from the federal government, the reviewing agency is the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- When an IL program grant flows through the State's Independent Living Program, the review will be done by the agency administering the State's Independent Living Program. In Oregon, the Independent Living Program is administered by the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (OVRs).

Who determines whether a person is eligible for services?

Centers offer services to individuals with any type of disability and of any age. Eligibility for services is determined by each CIL, in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. Generally speaking, to be eligible for services a person must experience a significant disability, which limits their ability to function independently in areas such as self care, mobility, employment, communication, education, residential, etc.

To be eligible, the person must also expect that the services will either:

- Improve their ability to function in their family or community,
- Maintain their ability to function in their family or community, or
- Help them obtain, maintain, or advance in employment.

What kinds of services do CILs provide?

CILs must provide at least four (4) **core services** to assist people with disabilities to live independently. Core services include:

1. **Information and Referral (I & R):** Centers have extensive resource information on numerous disability-related topics that might include housing, transportation, legislation, laws, adaptive equipment, employment opportunities, interpreter service providers, support groups, and lists of contacts for other service organizations and agencies.
2. **IL Skills Training:** Centers provide training and instruction to help individuals and groups gain skills, such as using transportation systems, managing budgets, cooking, using adaptive equipment, making good decisions, grooming, and many other subjects.
3. **Peer Counseling:** Centers offer opportunities where individuals can meet with other people who experience disabilities. The goal is for these "peers" to explore options, problem solve, discuss how to make adjustments, and provide support about the challenges of living with a disability. Independent Living Specialists, who experience disability themselves, are experienced in providing peer counseling on a number of issues.
4. **Advocacy:** Centers provide two types of advocacy. First, CIL staff assist consumers to obtain specific support services and accommodations needed from other agencies and individuals in the community. This is known as **individual advocacy**. In this process, consumers are taught how to become *self-advocates*. CILs also work with communities, businesses and government entities to create a more accessible and inclusive society where all people with disabilities can live more independently. This is known as **systems advocacy**.

While all CILs provide the services above, individual CILs may also offer any number of other services. Here are some examples of services that some CILs provide:

- **Technical Assistance** services ranging from accessibility surveys to equipment repair
- **Community Education/Outreach** services, including newsletter production to increase the public knowledge about the needs and issues faced by people with disabilities
- **Social/Recreational** services to assist people with disabilities in planning opportunities for social interaction and peer support
- **Respite** services to provide information and referrals that connect families and trained respite providers, as well as offering respite training to families, providers and community volunteers
- **Adaptive Equipment Loans** such as wheelchairs, scooters, etc.