



What is a Center for Independent Living?

Independent Living Center History

Centers for Independent Living (CIL), also called Independent Living Centers (ILC), came out of the Independent Living Movement led by Ed Roberts (a disability community leader) during the 1970's. People with disabilities were fighting for their rights and to access services. They wanted to choose which services were better for them and use these services while living in their community. People with disabilities believed that they knew what services worked best for themselves and others in the disability community. The first Center for Independent Living began in March of 1972 in Berkley, California. Under Title VII of the Rehabilitation Act of 1978, the national independent living program became a law. This law created CIL's around the country. As part of the law people with disabilities had to be the key players in the development of policies and managing the services of the independent living programs.

What Does That Really Mean?

A Center for Independent Living (CIL) is a nonprofit agency that assists people with all types of disabilities. CIL's are consumer-controlled. This means that the people with disabilities who receive the services make the decisions. By law, at least 51% of the employees and 51% of the board members of CIL's must be people with disabilities. CIL's are community-based, meaning the services are designed to meet the needs of the people in the community. They help people with disabilities to live as independently as possible in their own homes. CIL's do this by providing various services. Each CIL has different services. The services can change based on what people with disabilities need in their community. However, at every CIL there are four core services.

The Four Core Services of Centers for Independent Living

➤ **Information and Referral**

Consumers (people with disabilities) are given the information that they may need to live independently. Centers also help people become connected to different programs and agencies, such as Vocational Rehabilitation Service, that can provide assistance.



- **Independent Living Skills Training**
This includes services around living independently. For example, learning how to ride the bus or figuring out how you are going to use the shower in your home fall under this category.

- **Peer Counseling**
Under this service, people with disabilities get advice from other people with disabilities on many different issues. This can happen in the form of a mentoring program or support groups. Also, events may be hosted so people with disabilities and people without disabilities can connect or share concerns.

- **Individual and Systems Advocacy**
With this service, people with disabilities are taught self-determination strategies. In other words, they are taught how to fight for and get what they want. This can be done individually or within a group.

Other services may include deaf and blind services, housing, transportation, and recreation. Centers usually have people (as part of systems advocacy) who can go with students and their parents to IEP (Individual Education Plan) meetings at their school. Some centers also help youth who are going from high school to college or work to find accessible housing and PCAs (Personal Care Attendants).

How Do I Know if I Can Get Services?

If you are a person with a disability, then a Center for Independent Living is there to help you. There is an Independent Living Center in every state. To find out more about the CIL in your city/state, go to one of the links below to get contact information for your state.

CIL Links and Resources

- To find a center for independent living in your state visit:
Independent Living Research Utilization Directory of Centers & Statewide Independent Living Councils and click on your state or territory:
<http://www.ilru.org/html/publications/directory/index.html>

- To see the government description of a Center for Independent Living visit the U.S. Department of Education at: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/cil/index.html>