

State Independent Living Council's Statement of Values



Developed 2007

"An orientation to independent living philosophy and practice is not something we just hear, experience and integrate once. It is a philosophy we in the Movement keep reviewing, discussing, and refining to refresh, enhance, focus, and deepen our levels of understanding and practice. And we need to keep doing this over and over again!" -
June Kales

Our Purpose

Recognizing that there are varied philosophical views, even in the disability community, concerning the rights of the individual versus the desire of society to aid and protect citizens and loved ones who have disabilities - it is the Oregon State Independent Living Council's intent to proclaim, maintain, and protect the distinctions of Independent Living philosophy and service delivery. In this endeavor, the members of the Oregon SILC sought to develop a basic set of values to guide Oregon's Independent Movement through the years, and protect against the philosophical drift that is common in many movements.

Historical Perspective

The founding documents of the United States voice the belief that ALL individuals are created equal, with certain unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. However, for people with disabilities, achieving that equality - being viewed by society as peers - has been a long process.

The realization that injured soldiers returning from the Civil War still needed to be productive members of their families and their communities gave impetus for some early steps in the journey toward equality. Other major events, including wars and the Civil Rights Movement further opened the minds of Americans to consider whether the presuppositions typically made about people with disabilities were true or in keeping with our nation's values.

In the 1960's, the Independent Living Movement, as it is now known, was launched by students with disabilities who were seeking equal access to education - banding together in an effort to assist others with disabilities to break down barriers to inclusion that prevented many of their peers from pursuing their equal rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The mission of the SILC is to promote choice, equal access, and full inclusion of people with disabilities, throughout the State of Oregon.

Definition of Independent Living Philosophy

"Independent living stems from a philosophy, which states that people with disabilities should have the same civil rights, options, and control over choices in their own lives, as do people without disabilities." - *Gina McDonald*

"Independent Living – Control over one's life based on the choice of acceptable options that minimize reliance on others in making decisions and in performing every day activities. - Essentially it is living just like everyone else - having opportunities to make decisions that affect one's life, able to pursue activities of one's own choosing - limited only in the same ways that one's non-disabled neighbors are limited. Independent living has to do with self-determination. It is having the right and the opportunity to pursue a course of action. And, it is having the freedom to fail – and to learn from one's failures, just as non-disabled people do." - *Lex Friedan, co-founder for the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) program - also directed preparation of the original ADA legislation*

"Independent Living is the right to assume responsibility for directing one's life and to actively participate in the daily life of the community. It is living where one chooses and can afford, and includes managing one's own affairs, fulfilling many social roles, and making decisions that lead to less physical and psychological dependence on others. It is freedom to take risks and make mistakes." - *SPOKES Unlimited, a Center for Independent Living*

The Formulation of Values

In this process of forming a statement of values, recognition was given to the fact that the needs and desires of each individual with a disability are unique, and vary in complexity. The SILC believes that the individual, perhaps with the participation of their families and loved ones, is best suited, and is responsible, to make decisions concerning the direction for their life. The values stated here are not intended as a basis for judging the decision of any individual. They are merely intended to clarify values around several subjects deemed as important in assuring equality in dignity, access, inclusion, and choice for people with disabilities.

An attempt was made to frame the following values in such a way that we would see how to apply the values in our own lives, and as we interact with others. Five subject areas were identified as presenting the most confusion and controversy as to how to apply Independent Living philosophy. These are the subject areas for which a value was developed.

Subject #1 - Reasonable Risk vs. Choice

"The SILC values the right, using informed choice, to exercise the freedom to live, make mistakes, and succeed."

Many people choose to take risks. Some suffer negative consequences from those risks. At times, these very consequences actually lead to an individual's ultimate successes.

There are, no doubt, difficult individual decisions we all must make in specific situations – especially when one person's choice poses a threat to another who does not have a choice. There are elements of vulnerability to consider, and choices regarding whether to intervene. Ultimately, it is hoped that the right to make choices will not preclude a responsibility to consider the rights and well-being of others.

Subject #2 – Personally vs. Publicly Funded Supports

"The SILC values a quality of life that maximizes personal supports and minimizes public supports."

The SILC supports the provision of information regarding an individual's options, but believes the choice should be left with the individual, who is best suited to understand the needs related to his or her personal goals for independence.

Subject #3 – Employment Expectations

"The SILC value's employment and other methods of contribution to society."

While employment is not a requirement, and it is understood that the need for ongoing or additional sources of income may vary from individual to individual, for too long the societal norm has been that people with disabilities should be "taken care of" and aren't capable of work. The SILC sees employment as a means of personal dignity for many people with disabilities, as well as the means to live beyond poverty.

Subject #4 – Consequences for Actions

"The SILC values personal ownership for choices, actions, and consequences."

Subject #5 - Equality vs. Special Rights

"The SILC values the accommodations made for the uniqueness of individuals, which promote equal opportunity."

The SILC recognizes the uniqueness of each individual, knowing we all have specific talents and make specific contributions to society.

This document is available in alternate formats upon request to:
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