

CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING BASIC FACTS

How are Centers for Independent Living (CILs) Directed?

Each CIL has a Board of Directors that makes decisions about the policies and services of the organization. Law requires the majority of the Board members to be people who experience significant disabilities.

Typically, the **Board of Directors** sets policy, and hires/manages the Executive Director or person in charge of day-to-day operations. Many Boards have individual committees to deal with things like services, finances, personnel, etc. The Board of Directors meets regularly to carry out its duties.

An **Executive Director or Program Manager** is typically hired to oversee day-to-day operations and make sure the CIL follows the policies approved by the Board of Directors. He/she is responsible to hire and manage staff necessary to carry out the CIL's mission.

Are there any standards CILs must follow?

If a CIL receives funds through the Rehabilitation Act's Independent Living Program, it must remain compliant with federal grant management standards, as well as Standards and Assurances from Section 725 of the Rehabilitation Act, which includes operating under 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.

CILs are also required to follow general non-profit organization requirements, and requirements of any grantors.

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 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 funds) 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 a CIL directly from the federal government, the reviewing agency is the federal Administration on Community Living.
- 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 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

Who determines whether a person is eligible for services?

Centers offer services to individuals with any type of disability and of any age. CILs are responsible to verify eligibility for services, 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 consumer must also expect that the services will either:

- Improve his/her ability to function in their family or community,
- Maintain his/her ability to function in their family or community, or
- Help him/her obtain, maintain, or advance in employment.

What kinds of services do CILs provide?

CILs must provide at least four (5) **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, lists of contacts for other service organizations and agencies, etc.
2. **Independent Living 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, provide peer counseling on a vast number of issues.
4. **Advocacy:** Centers provide two types of advocacy.
 - CIL staff assist consumers to overcome obstacles to obtaining specific support services or accommodations needed from other agencies or 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**.
5. **Life Transition Assistance:** This relates to two types of transitions.
 - a. Youth who have left high school, and were eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act can receive assistance from CILs to make the transition to life after high school.
 - b. Individuals in nursing homes or other institutions, or who are at risk of entering an institution, will be helped to remain in their home or community-based setting, or to transition into a community-based setting or private residence.

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

- **Work Incentive Counseling** – To provide information about benefits for those exploring work through the Vocational Rehabilitation program
- **Community Education/Outreach** services, including newsletter production to increase 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
- **Brain Train® Programs** - To improve cognitive function
- **Adaptive Equipment Loans** such as wheelchairs, scooters, etc.
- **Peer Support Clubs** – Support for individuals with mental/emotional disabilities