

2013: Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services Governor's Report, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members advocate for independent living (IL) needs for Montanans with disabilities. The SILC promotes the IL philosophy that people with disabilities should have the same civil rights, options and control over choices in their own lives as do people without disabilities. The SILC develops, monitors, reviews and evaluates the State Plan for IL every three years, writes an annual report to the governor describing the status and effectiveness of IL services in Montana, reviews and analyzes the satisfaction of the consumers served by the centers.



June Hermanson, SILC Chairperson



**Michelle Williamson, SILC member
and Mike Beers, Summit CIL employee.**

MEMBERS SERVING ON THE SILC

Jim Brown, Billings; Chris Cragwick, Missoula; Courtney Damron, Missoula; Amanda Haley, Helena; June Hermanson, Helena; Astghik Iknatian, Billings; Melissa Kase, Billings; Mary Olson, Missoula; Tom Osborn, Great Falls; Troy Spang, Ashland; Dick Trerise, Helena; and Michelle Williamson, Polson.

SILC ACTIVITIES

The Montana Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living programs held a public hearing in March. The purpose of the public hearing was to receive input and comments regarding the State Plan for Independent Living. Also, the audience shared comments regarding VR and IL services and the statewide collaboration between the two programs. The public hearing comments were summarized for program staff and council members for their response to the comments. Some of the comments were: (1) the State Plan for IL needs to provide specific direction on how to address the problems of persons with disabilities; (2) there needs to be

services to assist people with disabilities to access Money Follows the Person and Community First Choice initiatives; and (3) appreciations for the collaboration with the SILC and the IL centers, to achieve independence, and the IL/VR partnership in the area of benefits planning. The three top issues that were identified by consumers who completed the document titled, “IL Customer Satisfaction Survey and Statewide IL Needs Assessment”, were: (1) expand IL services and options; (2) improve Medicaid options for persons with disabilities; and (3) improve benefits and supports of personal care workers. The SILC distributes this assessment tool to the state IL network to work on the identified issues.

SILC members attended and represented Montana at several national, regional and state conferences. Two members were on a panel presentation discussing transition programs located on several of the Montana reservations. Several members participated in the Montana IL Symposium in September.

The SILC worked on developing and writing the 2014-2016 State Plan for Independent Living. Two of the plan goals for this are to increase SILC member involvement and to enhance systems change through advocating for improved compliance with the Olmstead decision by assisting in the implementation of Money Follows the Person (MFP) and Community First Choice Option (CFCO). The goals are listed below:

STATE PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SPIL) GOALS: 2014-16

Goal 1: Consumer Services

Goal 2: Systems Change

Goal 3: Outreach to Underserved Population

Goal 4: Public Policy to Educate, Training and Create Awareness

Goal 5: General Support of State CIL Mission Statements, Goals and Objectives

Goal 6: IL Network Coordinating Activities

Goal 7: SILC Member Involvement

Some of the goals and objectives of the SPIL are incorporated into the SILC meeting agendas, and the SPIL Evaluation Committee gives an update of the SPIL progress.

For more information on the Independent Living Program, please visit our website:

<http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/detd/independentliving/index.shtml>

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT LIVING?

The philosophy of independent living promotes consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and systems advocacy in order to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities. Full inclusion and integration of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society is primary. This philosophy is implemented through the Statewide Independent Living Council and the network of centers for independent living (CILs). The CILs are non-profit, non-residential programs serving people with any type of disability.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILs)

Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT) Billings, Montana
Montana Independent Living Project (MILP) Helena, Montana
North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS) Black Eagle, Montana
Summit Independent Living Center, Inc. (Summit) Missoula, Montana



Bob Maffit, CIL Director and Tom Osborn, CIL Director representative on the SILC.



Mike Mayer, CIL Director at IL Symposium.

The CILs provide training to increase self-advocacy skills of consumers which is interdependent with systems advocacy. Direct services provided by the CILs assist in identifying the barriers, while systems advocacy promotes the removal of barriers. CILs reported 2,011 services and activities being provided to their consumers during the year.

ADVOCACY STORIES OF CIL CONSUMERS

A consumer came to LIFTT seeking assistance in finding her vocational path. Her inability to obtain a high school diploma or GED led to a conflicted working relationship with her counselor at vocational rehabilitation which in turn led her to LIFTT. Through participation in the “Living Well and Working Well with a Disability” workshops and working with an IL specialist, the young woman decided to start a business as an artistic blacksmith making dolls and other custom items. She completed a week long introductory course in blacksmithing. The coping strategies she learned from the workshops enabled her to participate in the course. She is continuing to work with an IL specialist on locating and accessing resources to continue her blacksmithing training as well as developing a business plan and finding potential start-up capital for her business.



Joe Burst, CIL Director

MILP was involved with a systems advocacy activity with the Helena City Commissioners when they discussed sub-division regulations focused on sidewalk installation. The commissioners needed to decide if sidewalk installation should be required before the building of a home takes place in a subdivision. If passed, sub-divisions would have complete paths of travel throughout the neighborhood which would provide paths of travel for individuals with disabilities, children, senior citizens and others.

MILP staff attended city board meetings and met with the city commissioners and the mayor to show their support. They were able to provide extensive research and professional support. The final decision was made at a city commission board meeting which had a tremendous response from the community in favor of the amendment. All new sub-divisions will now have complete sidewalks and accessible paths of travel throughout their neighborhoods along with streets and gutters.

NCILS reported a number of examples of individual and systems advocacy including:

(1) advocating with a consumer when she requested assistance in approaching her payee to insure money was first being provided for food and other personal necessities as required by law; (2) negotiating and providing guidance with an apartment complex on a consumer's behalf for an automatic outside door which the complex did install; and (3) providing the Living Well with Disability Workshops where the consumer can gain access to and learn additional self-advocacy and systems advocacy skills. NCILS also facilitates a Youth Transition Group which developed two resource guides for students with disabilities and their parents in transition planning. The information was distributed to 33 high schools.



Rally Day at State Capitol



Darren Larson, CIL Employee

Summit staff participated in the All-Abilities Accessible Playground Design Committee in Missoula. This committee is comprised of various community members and the Missoula Parks and Recreation Department. It is charged with designing a fully inclusive and accessible playground. The design plans for the All-Abilities Playground were completed in FY 2013 and construction and completion of the project will occur in FY 2014.

This report is available on the Statewide Independent Living website or in alternative formats upon request. <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/detd/independentliving/policy-documents.shtml>
For further information call 406-444-4175 or TDD 406-444-2590.