



2015
**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**
**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING
COUNCIL**
GOVERNOR'S REPORT

MISSION

To make independent living a reality for Montanans with disabilities by promoting and practicing a philosophy of consumer control, development of peer relationships and peer role models, self-determination, self-help, equal access, and advocacy in order to maximize independence, integration, and full inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream Montana.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) members are advocates for the independent living (IL) needs of Montanans with disabilities. The SILC promotes the IL philosophy that people with disabilities 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 Independent Living (SPIL) every three years, writes an annual report to the Governor describing the status and effectiveness of IL services in Montana, and reviews and analyzes the satisfaction of the consumers served by the Centers for Independent Living (CIL). With the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA), additional focus is being made on transitioning people with disabilities from nursing homes and institutions into independent living facilities. Additional attention is being directed toward youth with disabilities transitioning from high school into adult life.

CURRENT SILC MEMBERS

Mary Olson, Missoula, Chair; Monique Casbeer, Missoula, Vice Chair; June Hermanson, Helena, Secretary; Michelle Williamson, Ronan; Dick Trerise, Helena; Tom Osborn, Great Falls; Astghik Iknatian, Billings; Rosemary Hughes, Missoula; Lori Gaustad, Billings; Jim Brown, Billings; Robin Idol, Whitefish; Karen Underwood, Laurel; Kaitlyn Kovich, Helena.

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

There are four Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in the State of Montana which incorporate and make active the SILC philosophy and mission. The CILs provide training to increase self-advocacy skills of consumers which is interdependent with systems advocacy. This is done through direct services which identify barriers for persons with disabilities and through systems advocacy which promotes the removal of those barriers. In 2015 the CILs reported 1080 persons with disabilities received General Fund and Part B services and activities. The four CILs in Montana are:

- Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT), Billings
- Montana Independent Living Project (MILP), Helena, with branch offices in Bozeman and Butte
- North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS), Black Eagle, with a branch office in Glasgow
- Summit Independent Living Center Inc. (Summit), Missoula, with branch offices in Hamilton, Kalispell and Ronan

Number of People Served with State-Appropriated Money in 2015

Total = 1080 (General Funds = 559 and Federal Part B = 521)

Served by Disability Category

Mental/Emotional/Cognitive Disability	= 234
Physical Disability	= 620
Sensory Disability	= 45
Other Disability	= 181



Most Frequent Services (A person may have received services in more than one category)

- Information and Referral (791)
- Advocacy Services (554)
- IL Skills Training and Life Skills Training (609)
- Personal Assistant Services (410)
- Housing, Home Modifications, and Shelter Services (100)

Most Frequent Community Change Achievements Experienced by Those Seeking Services

- Transportation
- Disability Awareness
- Health Care Issues
- Legislative Collaboration
- Accessibility

(Examples of these achievements are demonstrated in the CIL narratives below.)

SILC Activities

- In January and again in March, during the legislative session, the SILC and CILs hosted Legislative Day and Rally Day in the Capitol Rotunda.
- Continued to maximize Community Outreach/ Education task force efforts to increase community inclusion and awareness of Independent Living Services.
- Strategized and collaborated on efforts to end Sheltered Workshops/subminimum wage employment for people with disabilities.
- Continued training/education on disability service agencies with similar missions for SILC members.
- Evaluated the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) to determine how goals and objectives are being met through the activities of the SILC and CILs.
- Participated in the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana Youth Transitions Conference.
- Worked with RSA to implement the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).
- Participated in Money Follows the Person and Community First Choice Option activities.

Centers for Independent Living Activities

All four centers for independent living (CIL) were actively involved in hosting ADA 25th Anniversary activities this July. The ADA Bus Tour took a swing through Montana and the CILs hosted it and used the occasion to provide information about the ADA. The ADA bus made stops in Billings, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula. Lloyd Sparks, a Montana Independent Living Project staff member, took the opportunity to speak about ADA successes in the Helena area. Mr. Sparks was part of the team that planned the ADA Bus Tour and activities in the state. Other speakers included Jim Marks, the Disability Employment and Transitions Administrator for DPHHS, John Pavao on behalf of the Governor, and a representative from Senator Testor. Over 100 individuals attended the Helena event.



Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT): 2015 has been a year of growth and change at LIFTT. In August LIFTT lost its executive director who left for employment with another organization. After a nationwide search, Tami Hoar was hired as the new executive director in December. Tami was formerly the program manager at the Montana Independent Living Project's Butte office. She has brought years of experience to her new position.

LIFTT continues to work throughout eastern Montana to assist people with disabilities live life more independently. In Billings they conduct regular meetings to bring employers, potential employees and interested community members together to learn about ways to successfully implement integrated competitive employment for people with disabilities. They have also assisted in redistributing assistive devices from individuals and families who no longer need them to individuals who do. LIFTT is also involved with transportation issues in Billings and elsewhere in their service area. Staff regularly attends the Billings Transportation Advisory Council (TAC) meetings to ensure the needs of the disabled are heard.

Together with North Central Independent Living Services they are working in central Montana to provide better access to services and education about disability history, culture, and independent living. Isaac Baldry out of Miles City is spearheading this effort.

Montana Independent Living Project (MILP): As part of the ADA 25th Anniversary, staff members flew to Washington DC for celebrations there. They met with Montana's congressional delegation to discuss disability issues in the state and presented information at the National Council for Independent Living Conference.



MILP has also been working with Vocational Rehabilitation to find work experiences for youth under the Pre-Employment Transitions Services set in place through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The young man in the picture was able to gain experience in construction through



this program.

MILP continues to provide services to many others in its service area of south central Montana. These include housing assistance, peer supports, self-advocacy and assistance with Medicaid applications and appeals. Through such efforts, a male with quadriplegia attended a Living Well with a Disability class which aided in increasing his self-esteem. Eventually, through his work as a volunteer peer advocate, he was hired by MILP. Employment qualified him to receive Medicaid for Workers with Disabilities and receive personal care through Self Directed Personal Assistance Services (SDPAS). All of this has aided greatly in improvements in his physical, emotional, and mental health.

MILP has also been greatly involved in Helena area transit services. Through the local Transportation Advisory Council, MILP staff has been part of a coalition, with funding through a grant, to assist the City of Helena in taking a fresh look at how it provides public transportation. In addition, MILP staff influenced the decision by the city to consider all accessibility issues before implementing a new route system that will include visible bus stops. MILP also secured a new ramp/lift equipped van that will be integrated into the local public taxi fleet, providing the first 24/7 ride for hire service in the Helena area.

North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS): NCILS is heavily involved in promoting youth transitions services in Montana. They hold the contracts for Montana Youth Leadership Forum (MYLF) and Montana Youth Transitions Conference and provide staff to ensure that those events are successful. This year the Montana Youth Transitions Conference was held in Great Falls and met with great success. 252 people attended the conference, including over 70 youth. There they learned about soft skills, succeeding in higher education, adult life, and participated in activities to learn about life after high school. MYLF was held at Carroll College in July. The high school youth who attended learned about leadership skills and self-advocacy skills which they could then bring back to their schools and communities. Several delegates were selected by their peers to attend the APRIL conference in Virginia Beach during October.

NCILS also regularly conducts Living Well with a Disability classes which are well attended and prepare participants to be peer advisors to others with disabilities. Staff is also involved in many community activities and events promoting independent living. They hosted the 25th ADA Anniversary Tour Bus when it came to Great Falls. This event was well attended and provided the opportunity for the community to learn about how the Americans with Disabilities Act has helped and changed our nation and communities.

In Havre NCILS is working with the community on a national grant study to look at accessibility issues in the area. Infrastructure and buildings will be examined to help determine the level of accessibility and determine what can be done to improve accessibility.

Summit Independent Living Center (Summit): Summit staff continues their great work in western Montana. They have leased space in a former warehouse in Missoula where they provide services to many youth through their BASE program. Through the efforts of youth coordinator Mike Beers, youth have had the opportunity to practice public speaking and performance skills doing improvisational comedy with a local group interested in standup comedy. In November they presented a very well received talent show at Missoula's Crystal Theater. Several youth members also had the opportunity to travel to the APRIL (Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living) Conference in Virginia Beach, Virginia. There they met with approximately 300 others to learn about and discuss disability issues across a broad spectrum from national legislation to relationships and sexuality among people with disabilities.

Summit also has leased 1000 square feet of space in a warehouse across the street from their Hamilton office where they host a number of groups and community activities. They call the space "The Refuge". Here are taught Living Well with a Disability, Working Well with a Disability, and other classes which help people with disabilities learn to live more independently in the community.

During the 2015 legislative session Summit set up a webpage to keep people informed of legislative issues of interest to people with disabilities. Summit employee, Joel Pedan, was hired by the Montana Centers for Independent Living Network to be the voice of people with disabilities during the legislature. He was tasked with keeping up on the latest developments with bills moving through the legislature. He also was instrumental in setting up both Legislative Day and Rally Day in the Capitol Rotunda where people with an interest in disability issues were able to meet with their legislative representatives to discuss those issues.

As with the other centers for independent living, Summit continues to help with information and referral services, housing assistance, self-advocacy, systems advocacy, community living and more to help people with disabilities live life more independently.