



**2020**  
**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, Annually submits a Program Progress Report (PPR) to the federal Administration for Community Living (ACL), 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). The SILC also works in collaboration with other local, state, and national entities to fulfill its mission.

**Current SILC Members**

Chair: Scott Birkenbuel (Helena/Bozeman), Vice Chair: Julie Lane Tudor (Three Forks), Secretary: Barbara Davis (Missoula), June Hermanson (Helena), David Hood (Great Falls), Lisa Allensworth (St Marie), Tom Thompson (Missoula), Richard Scott Williamson (Ronan), Beverly Berg (VR representative, Great Falls), Carlos Ramalho (CIL Director Representative, Billings)

**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 2020 the CILs reported 3,286 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 with a branch office in Glendive.  
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 2020

**Total = 3,286** (General Fund = 1,795, and Federal Part B = 1,491)

### Served by Disability Category

Mental/Emotional/Cognitive Disability

Physical Disability

Sensory Disability

Other Disability

### 5 Core Services

- Information and Referral
- Advocacy
- Peer Counseling
- IL Skills Training and Life Skills Training
- Housing, Home Modifications, and Shelter Services

### Most Frequent Community Change Achievements Experienced by Those Seeking Services

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

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

### SILC Activities

- In collaboration with the CILs wrote the new State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).
- Participated in webinars presented by Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU), Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL), and other disability organizations for ongoing education on disability issues.
- Individual members attended the SILC Congress, Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) Conference, and National Council on Independent (NCIL) Living Conference.
- Conducted meetings via Zoom, providing Council members with opportunities to learn new technology and communication methods.
- Participated in Task Forces with the CILs to promote access to transportation, affordable and accessible housing, stronger enforcement of ADA rules, and other efforts to achieve independent living and inclusion for people with disabilities.
- Continued participation in the Montana Youth Leadership Forum and Montana Youth Transitions Conference.
- Worked with Helena Joining Community Forces to promote resources and services to Service Members, Veterans, and their families.

### Centers for Independent Living Activities

The four centers for independent living (CILs) continue to be actively involved in several systems change and advocacy issues throughout the state. The Montana CIL Network Action Alert System; <https://www.mtcil.org/action-alerts/>, sends out information pertinent to those interested in disability issues. During Legislative Sessions this Action Alert System

provides information about legislation that impacts the lives of people with disabilities. Additionally the CILs' Legislative and Self-Determination Task forces work on ways to advocate for more inclusion of people with disabilities in their communities by promoting ADA compliance, public transportation, home and community based services, personal care attendant wage and hour issues, and more.

Since the beginning of the COVID pandemic the CILs have moved many of their operations to a virtual environment. Using CARES act funds, they have been able to provide their employees with equipment necessary to work from home. They also have continued to provide services to consumers throughout the pandemic.

Additional activities done by the individual CILs are as follows:

**Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT):** LIFTT staff working in Billings is engaged in a Community Living Skills class using Living Well in the Community online curriculum available through the Health Community Living website. Classes were moved successfully to a virtual environment. They meet once weekly to facilitate the skills sections about Disability Identity, Peer Support, Self-Advocacy, Self-Care, Housing, Technical Skills, Budgeting and Finance, Healthy Relationships, Transportation, and Time Management. The purpose of the class continues to be intended to help participants learn to attain, and maintain, independent and healthy lives. Another important outcome is that participants will learn to make positive and healthy choices.

**Montana Independent Living Project (MILP):** Cody is a young man who was in a car accident that left him paralyzed from the waist down. He called mILp looking for a wheelchair ramp but was able to access so much more. An Independent Living Specialist visited Cody at his home. He was living in a run-down camper that he would have to pull himself in and out of daily. The camper had no running water. The Specialist was able to assist Cody with housing applications and today he is living in an accessible apartment. By providing one on one peer support, the Specialist learned that Cody was a Veteran and encouraged him to apply for benefits at the VA. The Specialist also invited him to participate in mILp's adaptive ice-skating program where he could get out on the ice and just have some fun. A simple phone call to mILp opened the door to a variety of services and opportunities that continue to enhance Cody's life today.

**North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS):** NCILS worked with local consumers in finding needed housing based on I&R's received and continue to work with the local continuum of care housing group. NCILS has staff and consumers that participate on the community living task force and provided written comments to the Great Falls city commission regarding city building codes and Visitability and provides ongoing services to consumers in need of housing. Though CARES Act moneys have provided a few housing modifications along with assistance in discharge from assisted living homes.

**Summit Independent Living Center:** One of our peers, (Jenny M) who also works with Riverfront mental health center has been in collaboration with Summit to continue to provide training regarding mental health issues. As a certified WRAP facilitator, Jenny (along with assistance from county coordinator) will be facilitating this class in the near future. In the meantime, Jenny and the county coordinator will be studying and reacquainting themselves with the WRAP curriculum and designing delivery of the program appropriate to this community. Jenny also continues to facilitate two regular groups at The Refuge: Art Expressions and TGIAF. She is assisted by another peer, (Olivia) during the Art Expressions class.