ACL
Administration for Community Living

CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CILs)

Peer Power: People with disabilities helping people with disabilities THRIVE

Independent Living (IL):

A movement and philosophy based on the civil rights of all disabled people to:

make their own choices.

control their own lives.

have equal access to and inclusion in society.

"Nothing about us without us."
—IL Movement

CILs are authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

350+
CILs across every U.S. state and territory.

2/3
of CIL staff are individuals with disabilities.

75%
of decision-making positions are held by disabled people.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES LEADING THE IL VISION

Boots on the ground. People with disabilities directly serving people with disabilities and communities to:

MENTOR
and train their peers on strategies and resources to improve their daily lives.

CHALLENGE
stereotypes and push for full equality and inclusion.

CREATE
understanding that the entire community benefits when *everyone* can live, work, and play in it.

Every CIL facilitates independent living by providing:

- Assistance moving from institutions to the community
- Support to avoid entering institutional settings
- Help for young people transitioning to community living as an adult
- Information & referrals to services & practical resources
- Training on IL skills, such as personal care, budgeting, household management, & more
- Peer counseling, support, & mentoring
- Individual & systems advocacy

Depending on the needs of a CIL's community, here are additional services it may offer:

- Job search assistance & training
- Housing searches, modifications, & assistance
- Assistive technology access, training, & support
- Transportation assistance
- Health care navigation
- Eligibility screening & application assistance for Medicaid, Social Security, & more
- Recreation, socialization, & peer groups
- Emergency response planning
- Advocacy & assistance in schools
- Legal rights education

Real People. Real Impact.

In his last year of high school, **George**, a 19-year-old with an intellectual disability, participated in Project SEARCH at the Center for Independent Living Gulf Coast. Project SEARCH helps students with disabilities learn job skills. Through the program, George received training and hands-on experience in several kinds of jobs. After graduation, he was offered a full-time position in the maintenance department of a local car dealership. The CIL helped George and his family navigate the complex systems required to ensure he did not lose needed benefits as a result of his employment.

George now works full-time. He recently got a driver's license and bought a car that enables him to drive himself to a job he loves.

Eight-year-old **Emma** was born with one arm. When her school threatened to expel her for "bad behavior" after she began acting out in response to being bullied, she was referred to Able SC. The CIL paired her with LaQuanda, a staff member who has a similar disability. LaQuanda helped Emma's school recognize the bullying and make changes to strengthen the inclusion of students with disabilities. With LaQuanda's help, Emma's family and the school made a plan to allow Emma to stay in school.

LaQuanda became a friend and role model to Emma, taking her for drives and offering support only someone who has "been there" can give. Her example helped Emma gain confidence and envision her future of living independently.

Allan, who is 66, was receiving treatment in a rehabilitation facility after experiencing homelessness. While his goal was to leave the facility and live independently, he didn't have anywhere to go. His local CIL helped him access his Social Security benefits, which enabled him to qualify for a subsidized apartment. When an apartment became available, the CIL team eased his transition to community living by providing household items, furniture, linens, groceries, and other necessities.

Today Allan enjoys living in his own apartment and spends time doing the things he couldn't do in a nursing facility, like doing his own laundry and going shopping.

Every day, CILs are moving disabled people from being *excluded* to being *included*.