



Partnering with CILS and the IL Network for Housing and Services Support

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are community-based, cross disability, non-profit organizations designed for and operated by people with disabilities. CILs are hubs of disability information and referral, peer support, and advocacy. All federally funded CILs are required to provide five core services. CILs are key partners for state Medicaid agencies in the design and implementation of programs providing Medicaid-funded housing-related services and supports to eligible individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness (and others who might qualify under the state’s specific eligibility requirements).

Table 1. 5 Core CIL Services Requirement and Relevant Medicaid-Funded Housing-Related Services and Supports

CIL Core Service	Medicaid-Funded Housing-Related Services and Supports
Information and Referral (I&R) I&R staff provide individuals with disabilities (and their families/support staff) with information on services for which they might qualify and a referral to the agencies that run the relevant programs so they can take action themselves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing search assistance through referrals to housing providers and rental subsidy program offices• Home modification program information• Community resources and benefits information• Legal aid referral• Transportation
Peer Support People with disabilities can receive mentoring, guidance, and support from other people with disabilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing search• Housing-related training workshops and one-on-one housing plan development and navigation support
Independent Living Skills Training CILs offer training on various independent living skills that are crucial for individuals with disabilities to lead independent lives. Often these training courses are individualized based on an individuals’ needs and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budgeting• Household management (including tenant responsibilities)• Personal care management• Accessing community resources

CIL Core Service	Medicaid-Funded Housing-Related Services and Supports
<p>Advocacy Support Individual: CILs support people with disabilities in advocating for their own rights and access to essential services.</p> <p>Systems: CILs advocate for changes to the policies, laws, and systemic practices with a focus on creating meaningful and lasting improvements for people with disabilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing guidance and resources to empower individuals to confidently navigate systems and become effective self-advocates. • Enhancing inclusion, accessibility, and equity within the local community and beyond through system advocacy.
<p>Transition CILs assist people with disabilities wishing to transition from institution-based to community-based living. CILs may provide direct and indirect support to people with disabilities in every stage of life, by ensuring that they have the resources and opportunities to live independently and thrive in their communities. Transition services also include diversion of individuals at risk of institutionalization or homelessness, and youth transitioning into adulthood.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing navigation • Housing plan development (including budgeting) • Coordination and possible delivery of wraparound services and supports

While all CILs are required to maintain these 5 core services, they are not limited by them. Each CIL provides services based upon the identified barriers for people with disabilities for full community access and integration in the CIL’s coverage area, which make each unique. Many have programs which cover additional housing-related services and supports. For example, many offer a home modification assistance program as well as an assistive technology loan program to support greater independence and access. These programs, as well as additional community supports like personal care assistance services, employment supports, and benefits counseling mean that CILs are well-situated as partners in the delivery of Medicaid-funded housing-related services and supports and the coordination of services for individuals with disabilities who may qualify for those programs.

There are over 350 federally funded CILs across the country and dozens of state-funded CILs. To find a CIL near you, visit the [ACL](#)

Benefits to Partnering with CILs

The Independent Living Network, including Centers for Independent Living (CILs), is a crucial partner in advancing housing and service partnerships to ensure people with disabilities can live

independently in their communities. This grassroots network, present in every state, comprises individuals with disabilities, advocates, and support systems dedicated to breaking down barriers and promoting equity.

Graphic 1. Benefits of CIL as Partners



1. Established Grassroots Network

Built on decades of grassroots advocacy and consumer control work, ensuring that partnerships reflect the priorities of people with disabilities. Each state has an extensive network of CILs that connect local communities, amplifying the voices and experiences of individuals with disabilities. State and community organizations can tap into that network through partnerships with CILs to provide increased access to community housing supports and services and decrease more costly hospital and emergency room expenses.

2. Lived Experience as Expertise

CILs are mandated to continue to include and encourage the experience of people with lived experience in the designing, operationalizing and implementing of programs to assist people with disabilities. Their valuable insights as experts on navigating systems designed to assist them, overcoming barriers for full community inclusion and independence, and identifying wraparound community supports to stabilize housing for people with disabilities can help to inform systems-level changes to increase access to necessary services and maximize the effectiveness of federal, state, and local resources. This firsthand knowledge is also instrumental in shaping inclusive housing and service solutions.

3. Advocacy Across the Lifespan

CILs serve individuals across all stages of life, addressing diverse needs from infancy and childhood to older adulthood. They understand that there is no one-size-fits-all intervention that

will help all people with all disabilities to find, secure, and stabilize community housing that is affordable, accessible, and safe. They are familiar with the varying types of interventions that can support individuals in the community live as independently as they wish.

Effective Partnering with CILs

CILs are no stranger to collaboration. In fact, most commonly partner with other community agencies and state government agencies, which can include public housing authorities, protection and advocacy agencies, vocational rehabilitation, hospitals and community health centers, aging networks, healthcare systems and managed care plans (MCPs). CILs are currently expanding their collaborations to include MCPs to provide home and community-based services (HCBS) through Medicaid waiver authorities and Money Follows the Person demonstration programs. Examples will be added demonstrate how CILs can be effective partners in serving individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Lessons Learned – Establishing Sustainable Partnerships with CILs

1. Equitable Relationships

Partnerships must prioritize equity by valuing the expertise of lived experience. This requires a commitment to shared power and respect for the knowledge and leadership of people with disabilities. Equitable partnerships also require sustainable and inclusive funding to ensure that the Independent Living Network can effectively participate and contribute.

2. Language and Historical Barriers

Understanding and using inclusive language fosters trust and demonstrates respect. Awareness of historical inequities in housing and services (both physical barriers and systemic policy and services) is essential to building authentic and lasting relationships with the Independent Living Network.

3. Consumer Control

CILs operate under the principle of consumer control, meaning people with disabilities must have a leading role in decision-making processes. Effective partnerships respect and uphold this value that local people living in the community should be making decisions about the programs and services needed at their center. This is the beauty of independent living centers. All CILs have 5 basic core services that they must provide but all customize them to meet the needs of their individual communities.