

ACL/ILA Policy on

Independent Living Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response Services

Introductory Note: Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs) are increasingly playing a pivotal role in addressing the often daunting challenges individuals with disabilities and their families face during and following a disaster or other emergency. ACL recognizes the enormous importance of CILs providing inclusive emergency preparedness and disaster response services to the lives, health and independence of individuals with disabilities and their families. Moreover, a key element of effective emergency preparedness is to take action and put steps in place that are essential to responding to disaster before it strikes. The following Policy/Procedure is provided as guidance to assist in emergency preparedness and disaster response efforts.

CILs may provide Title VII independent living (IL) services to individuals with disabilities who have been affected by a disaster or emergency who live within their designated service area and who have evacuated into their service area.

It is important to emphasize at the start that a CIL that receives Part C funding can provide IL services to individuals with disabilities living inside its service area at any time, including during and after a disaster or emergency situations. CILs provide both a set of core services and often additional independent living services that can be critical to assisting individuals with disabilities to maintain their health, independence and well-being during these times.

We encourage Centers for Independent Living to rely on each other during such periods to meet the critical needs of people with disabilities. ACL strongly recommends CILs develop a working relationship with one another in advance of a disaster whenever possible. This will enable the network to determine how they can best work together to meet the vast needs that will arise.

While we do not require it, we also urge CILs to strongly consider developing Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) to outline steps Centers can take to assist people with disabilities in affected disaster areas, including service areas that a Center is not assigned to serve. To be effective, such MOUs and similar agreements, of course, should be developed prior to a disaster so that it can be carried out if and when it becomes necessary. ILA Project Officers will assist with this upon request.

If the area affected is not covered by a CIL, one or more CIL(s) in the general vicinity is certainly allowed and encouraged to provide services to individuals with disabilities affected. Given the need to provide services quickly in a disaster, a CIL does not need prior permission from ACL before providing IL services.

However, ACL will reach out and request a brief explanation as to how services will be provided by the one or more CILs that work in an affected area as well as signatures from the CILs providing services. The explanation should include information and documentation adequate to allow the Director of the Independent Living Administration and others to understand the importance of the CILs involvement and service provision. ACL will allow CILs to provide Part C funded independent living services to individuals during and after disasters in communities located outside their approved service area

for as long as the need exists as determined by the Director in consultation with the CIL(s) and SILC(s) in the affected area(s).

In an area affected by a disaster where a CIL is already providing services, but requires the assistance of another CIL, ACL expects the CIL seeking to provide disaster response services to collaborate with the existing CIL serving the area to do so. We also strongly encourage the SILC, the Statewide CIL network, the DSE and others to work together to plan, prepare and respond to disasters and emergencies in as inclusive and effective a manner as possible.

When a disaster or emergency occurs every effort will be made by the Project Officer to stay in regular touch with CIL(s) and the SILC(s) in the affected areas. Ongoing communication between all parties will enable ILA to assist CILs with carrying out their work.

This policy is effective immediately.