

GOVERNOR'S REPORT

2022



MISSION:

Promote self-determination and full inclusion of people with disabilities in Montana.

A word from MTSILC:

The Montana Statewide Independent Living Council (MTSILC) and the Independent Living Program have enjoyed a productive year. The number of people served increased after a decline in recent years. The first Independent Living (IL) Symposium in several years was held in partnership with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS). The IL Symposium brought a renewed energy to the entire disability community, and the MTSILC, CILs and our shareholders are ready to promote the idea that people with disabilities are the best experts of their own needs. They have a crucial and valuable perspective to contribute, and deserve equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities.

Council Members:

June Hermanson, Chair
Scott Williamson, Vice Chair
Brent Morris, Secretary

Carlos Ramalho
Joel Peden
Molly Kimmel
Michael Manhardt
Allyson Talaska
Tom Thompson
Jean Schroeder
Emma Hixson

Core Services

1. Information and Referral
2. Independent Living Skills
3. Independent and systems advocacy
4. Peer Support
5. Transitions

MTSILC Activities and Accomplishments

MTSILC recruitment follows best practices by seeking representation from all stakeholders involved in Montana's IL programs. The board is bringing unserved and underserved demographics to the table, and providing training in IL history, philosophy, and board functions. Youth transitioning to adulthood are included in board operation, are involved with community employment and education, and are becoming Montana's future leaders. MTSILC is conducting outreach in rural and frontier counties along with engaging in Indian country and expanding IL awareness with services across the state.

MTSILC is involved nationally by sending board members to the SILC Congress and the National CIL conference. Montana is engaged with neighboring states to create policy, utilizing new resources and working with natural disaster response teams to educate them about how services will best support people with disabilities in the event of floods, fires, and cold winter conditions.

MTSILC collaborates with Vocational Rehabilitation and Blind Services (VRBS) and the CILs by working on joint task forces and facilitating symposiums to examine such issues as transportation, affordable housing, youth employment, and the development of state policy supporting future inclusion for all people living with disabilities.

MTSILC has opened the door for positive change by developing standards utilizing the Olmstead Act to facilitate best practices supporting person-centered planning. This helps provide services such as home and community-based housing, employment, education, and recreation. MTSILC initiated a committee for Olmstead planning at the MTSILC Symposium in August 2022 where Governor Gianforte provided opening statements. During a question-and-answer period, Governor Gianforte committed to working in partnership with MTSILC to rework Montana's Olmstead Plan. Subsequently the MTSILC Chair has met with the Director of DPHHS on this project and garnered the support of Montana legislators to advance this initiative through the 2023 legislative session.

MTSILC is engaged with VRBS and the CILs to develop their respective state plans with community members, service providers, education professionals, and area policy makers to bring all voices to the table.

Centers for Independent Living (CIL)

Total Number Served with State-Appropriated Money

Total: 3355 (General Fund = 1618, Federal Part B = 1737)

Most frequent community change achievements experienced by those seeking services

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

A word from the Centers:

Thanks to the 2022 efforts of Montana's four Centers for Independent Living (CILs): Living Independently for Today and Tomorrow (LIFTT), North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS,) Montana Independent Living Project (mILp), and Summit Independent Living Center, Montana became more disability-friendly and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). However, much work remains. To elevate Montana even more as one of the best states to live in with a disability, the CILs are establishing partnerships with the State and counties to work collaboratively and creatively.

We will continue to seek innovative and imaginative ways to reach out to those marginalized by disabilities and the financial hardships that follow.

We will strive to insert this population into the mainstream of society through education and employment. For this reason, Montana's CILs are particularly concerned about the younger generation soon leaving high school. We will continue to work with Disability Employment and Transitions Division (DET) and VRBS to mentor young adults to make informed decisions about pursuing higher education or a professional career. The primary goal of the CILs is to establish Montana as one of the most accessible states in the country for people with disabilities.

Consumer Success Story

CIL: Ability MT (formerly mLp)

Disability Type: Cystic Fibrosis

Community Partners Involved: Orphan Girl Community Theater

IL Goal Achieved: Community and Systems Advocacy

Which Core Services Were Provided: IL Skills Training, Individual and Systems Advocacy, Information and Referral, Peer Counseling

IL Specialist: Cassie Weightman

In the Butte office, we have a long-standing women's group made up of incredible, strong and vocal women. One afternoon, while gathered for coffee, we started sharing personal stories. The idea was born to bring our stories to the stage. Knowing we couldn't do it alone, I contacted Orphan Girl Theater, shared our idea and we started the process of Speaking Our Truth: Storytelling through a Disability Lens. Over the next few months, we identified eight individuals who wished to perform their stories on stage. We then matched some of those individuals with writers to help curate their stories, while others wrote their own. In May 2022, the two-night show was performed at the East Middle School auditorium in front of an audience.

Each performance was deeply impactful to both the performer and the audience. All stories were unique, but the story lines were interwoven through self-determination, independence, advocacy, vulnerability, and peer relationships. The eight individuals grew close, showed love and support for one another, and peer relationships were grown. It was the perfect scenario where someone was able to speak their truth without having to worry about how the person hearing the message would respond or attempt to "silver line" their experience for them. It was equally as powerful for the audience, as they could hear someone's truth without the obligation to respond or react. The feedback from the audience was very enthusiastic and everyone felt strongly that the event should be repeated.



ABILITY
MONTANA

Consumer Success Story

CIL: North Central Independent Living Services (NCILS)

Disability Type: Physical

Community Partners Involved: Blackfeet Care Center

IL Goal Achieved: Relocation from Nursing Home

Which Core Services Were Provided: Transition

North Central Independent Living Services



An IL Specialist was called by the social worker at Blackfeet Care Center, who was looking for options to help a woman that had been in the care center for several months. I explained how the CFC program works, and how North Central Independent Living Services assists in providing this service so that members can stay in their homes and receive the care that they require. The social worker said that he had a woman he would like me to talk to and see if North Central Independent Living Services could help her transition back into her home. The woman, who wanted to be home with her family, was excited that there was a CFC program through North Central Independent Living Services that could help her return home, and receive the care that she needed to be with her family. This woman is now a member and was admitted to the Indian Health Services in Browning for an open pressure wound on her tailbone. After a short period of time at Indian Health Services Hospital, the member was transferred to Blackfeet Care Center to continue to heal. The member said that she had received great care at Blackfeet Care Center, but really missed her family, and felt that they would be a big part of her healing process. I worked with the social worker at Blackfeet Care Center to transition the member from the nursing home back into the members residence with her family. Mountain Pacific Quality Health worked with us to get a service profile plan to address the needs of the member to help her with her activities of daily living and her health maintenance activities. From the time that I had met the member at the Blackfeet Care Center, to the time I visited the member in her home, you could see a big difference. She was she was happy and it was helping her to be home with her family. The member has stated numerous times that it makes her very happy to be home with her family helping her, and that she is very grateful for the services that North Central Independent Living services provides.

30 copies of this DPHHS public document were published at an estimated cost of 32 cents per copy, for a total of \$9.60, which includes \$8.60 for printing and \$1.00 for distribution. Primary distribution of the document will be through email and placement on the program website.

Alternative accessible formats of this publication will be provided upon request.

For further information call 406-444-2590 or email mtsilk@mt.gov

For more information on IL, please visit our website: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/detd/independentliving/>