

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20202

INFORMATION MEMORANDUM  
IM-04-06  
DATE: February 9, 2004

ADDRESSEES: STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES  
(BLIND)  
CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS  
REGIONAL REHABILITATION CONTINUING EDUCATION  
PROGRAMS (RRCEPS)  
AMERICAN INDIAN VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION  
SERVICES PROGRAMS  
RSA SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM  
STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCILS  
CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING  
STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AGENCIES

SUBJECT: Final Evaluation Report on the Centers for Independent Living  
(CIL) Program

CONTENT: The Final Report on the Evaluation of the Centers for Independent  
Living Program has been approved by the U.S. Department of  
Education for release. This report presents findings from a  
comprehensive evaluation of title VII, chapter I, Part C of the  
Centers for Independent Living (CIL) program. The Cherry  
Engineering Support Services Incorporated (CESSI) conducted the  
study. This study can be found at the Rehabilitation Services  
Administration's website at:

<http://www.ed.gov/policy/speced/leg/rehab/eval-studies.html>

CIL programs promote a philosophy of independent living—consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and individual and systems advocacy—the goal of which is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and enhance the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society.

The study was initiated in October 2000. The broad purpose of the evaluation was to examine the role and performance of the CIL program and related services available to

individuals with disabilities, with a particular focus on the extent to which the CIL program fulfilled its intended goal to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence, and productivity of individuals with disabilities, and enhance the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities into the mainstream of American society. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- Support the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) reporting requirements.
- Assist CILs to identify successful service and advocacy strategies.
- Inform advocates and policy-makers about the Centers for Independent Living Program.

CESSI obtained data from three sources: 1) a mail survey of all CILs who receive Federal funding under the title VII, Chapter 1, Part C Program, 2) telephone surveys of 569 current and former consumers selected using a random sample of 104 centers and an additional random sample at the center level to identify the consumers to be interviewed, and 3) the RSA 704 Report which describes the centers and the characteristics of the center consumers. Among the study's key findings:

- CILs are providing a wide variety of beneficial services and systems advocacy in their communities. This is being done in accordance with the IL philosophy—consumer empowerment and control, peer support, systems change, and cross-disability services.
- Centers are serving minorities with disabilities in at least the same percentages that they are present among people with disabilities in the United States.
- Centers receive high marks on most measures related to access.
- CILs serve consumers who tend to be poor, unemployed, and unmarried. The vast majority of the consumers served have a total household income below \$20,000 per year. These factors are risk factors for loss of independence. Consequently, CILs are serving consumers who can purchase few services to promote their independence.
- Consumers under age 18 received the full array of IL services less frequently than older consumers, presumably because they are still in school and living with parents.
- Hispanics were less likely to receive assistance with technology or equipment than other consumers. Consumers with mental disabilities received employment advisement services less often than people with physical or sensory disabilities.
- A vast majority of CIL directors reported consumer participation in almost all of the advocacy issues in which their center was involved. Centers are achieving a significant level of community change in areas as diverse as transportation, housing, deinstitutionalization, education, employment, and civil rights.
- Consumers indicated that they benefited significantly from the services that they received from the CIL. The majority of consumers reported concrete changes in their lives as a result of these changes. Consumers indicated that services received from CILs improved their self-perception, general independence,

- independent living skills, and level of knowledge about other services and programs.
- Over fifty percent of center directors characterized the relationship with their board of directors as very positive and supportive.
  - Although 89 percent of center directors felt they had some representation on the State Independent Living Council (SILC), they had mixed reactions when asked whether the SILC was meeting the requirements spelled out in Section 705 of the Rehabilitation Act. It is clear that many center directors felt that their SILC is falling short in several areas of representation and responsibility.
  - Center directors felt positively about the on-site monitoring reviews conducted by RSA and the designated State unit. They found the on-site reviews helpful to the center's operation and especially appreciated the involvement of peer reviewers in the process.
  - Approximately a quarter of the directors surveyed said that the Section 704 Report was very helpful in assessing the quality of center services and advocacy, and another 44 percent said it was somewhat helpful, but the directors indicated that the report focuses on process rather than outcome measures, and some key definitions need to be clarified.

If you have any questions concerning the Final Report, please call James Billy, Branch Chief, Independent Living Branch, at (202) 205-9362. If you wish copies of the report, please contact Mrs. Tammy Nelson at email address [tammy.nelson@ed.gov](mailto:tammy.nelson@ed.gov) or Ms. Deborah Barnes at email address [deborah.barnes@ed.gov](mailto:deborah.barnes@ed.gov) Mrs. Nelson and Ms. Barnes can be reached via telephone at (202) 205-8299.

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Joanne Wilson  
Commissioner

CC: CSAVR  
NORP  
NAPAS  
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