



# Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Network



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## The History of Civil Rights

People with disabilities had no protection of a safe and fair life prior to the 1970s. Those who the public deemed “not normal” were placed in separate overcrowded, isolated spaces that warehoused people away from the rest of society. Death at the hands of care staff, medical providers, and the apathy or bureaucracy of government officials was standard and hidden in spaces deemed as boarding schools or medical facilities.

The first positive change occurred when more people became aware of this violence. Families of Minnesota collectively got together to bring their loved ones home – advocating with legislators and pressuring the governor at the time to find new ways to care. Momentum increased and people with disabilities took charge. Through years of support for each other, thinking creatively, and organizing their actions together, landmark legislation to provide education, employment, and basic human rights protections began.

## The Regression of Rights

The efforts through the 1970s to 1990s was an era that brought about many positive changes, however, these changes within Minnesota and nationally, did not eliminate ableism. The practice of segregating and traumatizing people with disabilities continues today. Rights established are being challenged and violence is happening, only now in different ways. Examples of backsliding in forwarding disability rights include:

- Neglect, abuse, and isolation of persons with disabilities in group homes, treatment centers and hospitals.
- Respect for the professions of direct support care workers remains unchanged as minimal wages and benefits are provided. People cannot properly care if they themselves are not provided for.
- People with disabilities being tracked through Electronic Visit Verification by the government, depriving them of their rights as a citizen to privacy.

- Most public spaces remaining inaccessible 32 years following the ADA.
- Housing options that are both affordable and accessible remain severely limited.

## A Call for Justice

People with disabilities are powerful, valuable residents of our state yet they and their families are in a state of survival. We, as a society, are at a critical point in the well-being of our state’s residents. Our obligation to our residents reflects who we are as a community now and charts the course for our next generations to come. Programs, services, and supports that were set up in the 1970s to promote access and thriving are failing people with disabilities because the public, our policies, our laws, and our state officials need to recognize equity work is the work of everyone and every aspect that touches every resident’s life.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted early on how people with disabilities continue to be excluded as valuable community members and that equity efforts must consider how to incorporate people with disabilities to achieve wellness for all identities experiencing historically marginalized. Persons who identify as part of traditionally recognized equity populations experience magnified barriers and discrimination. Disability affects everyone – all races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ages, rural or metro residents.

Financial stability, employment, education, and true belonging cannot be achieved without recognizing the systemic barriers in all areas of how our communities are structured. Radical shifts in how individual and community care is delivered needs to be led by people with disabilities. We invite you to consider Centers for Independent Living (CILs) as a partner in solutions for meaningful change.

## WHY CILs

### *CILs are the community.*

- 51% or more of all CILs are run by and employ people with all types of disabilities.
- CILs serve all 87 counties of Minnesota.
- CILs understand that diversity of geography and keeping things in the community is critical to meeting people with disabilities where they are.
- CILs approach is respectful and responsive to all cultures, identities and beliefs.

### *CILs are the network people with disabilities trust.*

- CILs heritage is founded in the Disability Civil Rights movement.
- CILs prioritize an individual's right to choose, the right to risk, the right to learn, to fail, and to grow.
- CILs are experts at knowing the complexities of the service system.

### *CILs are flexible, meeting people where they are.*

- Core services are open-door and flexible so that anyone can receive support.
- CILs support anyone, at any time, any goal, any disability or condition, any income.
- CILs understand disability as an identity is complicated. There are cultural, biological, and social factors that create barriers for people.
- The only qualifier is you tell CILs how you self-identify and what your goal is.

## WHO Can Access CILs

### *People with disabilities lead.*

- Disability is part of the human experience. People with disabilities are valuable, powerful community members.
- There are so many access needs based on your mental, cognitive, sensory, physical, or other needs. No matter how you identify, our primary mission is supporting you living a life on your terms.
- CILs want all people in their capacities to understand where power resides and how to work together to make our community accessible for all.

### *All are welcome to learn from CILs.*

- People with disabilities intersect all races, cultures, ages, geographical location, sexual orientation, and so forth. CILs improve access for all in solidarity with those fighting for justice.
- CILs offer technical assistance to anyone seeking to improve accessibility in the community.

## WHEN to Access a CIL

- At any major event or transition in your life.
- As needs change, at any age.
- For information on how services and supports work.
- To learn more about disability rights, justice, and action to support building accessible communities.
- To connect with others who have disabilities, to advocate together for local and statewide change.

## About the Minnesota Independent Living Network:

**Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council (MNSILC)** is a governor appointed advisory group comprised of people with disabilities, Centers for Independent Living, State Services for the Blind, and Vocational Rehabilitation Services. MNSILC's mission is to increase the power and influence of Minnesotans with disabilities in coordination with the community and the independent living network. Fifty-one per cent of the people on MNSILC are people with disabilities.

**Centers for Independent Living (CIL)** are independent 501c3 nonprofit organizations, representing people with disabilities locally, serving residents of every region. The eight CILs are: Access North, Freedom Resources, Independent, Lifestyles Center for Independent Living (ILCIL), Metropolitan Center for Independent Living (MCIL), Options, Southeastern Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SEMCL), SMILES, and Southwest Minnesota Center for Independent Living (SWCIL).

**To learn more about the Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Network, contact us at:**

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