

Centers for Independent Living

A Center for Independent Living (CIL) is a community-based, private, non-profit agency. It is designed and operated within a local community by individuals with a range of disabilities, and it provides an array of independent living services. These services are described in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The goal of a CIL is for individuals with disabilities to live full lives independently in their community. This is achieved by enabling individuals with disabilities to have knowledge and access to services.

Educators can partner with CILs to help students obtain the services they need to transition to community settings. The following information will help you understand the benefits of including CILs in transition planning.

Core Services

CILs provide the core services listed below. CILs sometimes provide additional services depending on their funding and the needs of their region. Most services are provided at no cost, though the ones that are contracted through other entities could have a cost.

- Advocacy
- Peer mentoring
- Independent living skills training
- Information and referrals
- Transition services for youth transitioning out of high school
- Transition services for individuals moving out of nursing homes

Who Can Benefit from a CIL?

Any individual with a significant disability can benefit from involvement with a CIL. CILs provide a critical component in informing individuals about community resources, developing transition plans for youth, and teaching self-advocacy and independent living skills.

How Can a CIL Assist with Transition Planning?

CILs offer expertise in assisting individuals to access community-based services. They provide training in self-advocacy so that youth learn how to appropriately advocate for themselves in the community, on the job, and in their personal lives. CILs also contain a wealth of knowledge regarding community-based services, and they use that to work with individuals to achieve their goals of independence. And finally, CILs also partner with many other entities and connect individuals with disabilities by making referrals to various community-based agencies.

How Do You Refer School-Age Students to a CIL?

You can contact a CIL and request support and information for transition planning. You can also invite a CIL representative to the IEP team meeting that discusses transition planning. Reach out to the CIL, and see how they may help students obtain their goals of independence. CILs are located in 23 regions of Virginia, and you can use this [CILs in Virginia map](#) to identify the CIL or CIL satellite in your area.

Tips for Using CILs

The following tips will help you to utilize the resources that CILs have to offer.

- Reach out to the local CIL to learn about independent living and transition resources. Invite a CIL counselor or advocate to participate in IEP meetings.
- Participate in online trainings available through CILs.
- View their websites and social media.

Conclusion

CILs are uniquely positioned to assist in the transition planning process as they serve individuals with all disabilities, have extensive knowledge on laws and services that empower people with disabilities to live independently, and are run by people with disabilities.