



Knowledge and Capacity of Centers for Independent Living on Providing Training and Technical Assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act

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Overview

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability organizations that are federally funded under the Rehabilitation Act to provide an array of independent living services to people with disabilities. They are responsible for the following core services: (a) information and referral; (b) independent living skills training; (c) individual and systems advocacy; (d) peer counseling; and (e) transition assistance, including (1) transitions from institutions to community-based residences, (2) assisting those at risk of institutionalization to remain in the community, and (3) transitions of youth with significant disabilities after completion of secondary education to postsecondary life or employment. 29 U.S.C. 17(E).

The Southwest ADA Center (SWADA) is one of ten federally-funded centers across the country, collectively known as the ADA National Network, that provides training and technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). SWADA's parent organization, the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) program at TIRR Memorial Hermann, provides training and technical assistance to CILs through its CIL-NET project. CIL-NET aims to make CILs more effective, able to fulfill their role as community advocates and change agents, and able to develop strong consumer-responsive services. This study leverages the sister relationship between SWADA and CIL-NET by discovering CILs' capacity to provide consumers with information about the ADA.

Purpose

The purpose of the CILs Knowledge and Capacity survey was to gain an understanding of how CILs provide training and technical assistance (TA) in regards to the ADA. CILs across the states and territories of the United States were surveyed in order to achieve the following three goals. The first goal was to understand perceptions of CILs regarding their knowledge and capacity to provide assistance to their consumers to understand (a) their rights in employment, (b) the obligations of their state and local governments to make their programs and services accessible, and (c) their rights to access public accommodations. CILs were also asked to rate their capacity to provide transition services related to the U.S. Supreme Court decision under *Olmstead v. L.C.* 527 U.S. 581 (1999), which interpreted the ADA's integration mandate¹ to require states to place people with disabilities in community settings rather than institutions when treatment professionals believe it is appropriate.

The second goal was to determine areas that CILs identified as essential to the professional and organizational capacity building for increasing their consumers' understanding of their rights under the ADA. The third and final goal was to identify promising practices used by CILs to facilitate the individuals' understanding of their rights under the law. We were able to achieve these goals by distributing a survey to assess the knowledge and capacity to provide assistance, determine essential areas for capacity building, and identify successful practices of CILs. No previous data exists that provides assessment information, specific to the ADA, from CILs. The collection and analysis of this on-the-ground knowledge about existing and desired capacity will have a significant impact on how the ADA Centers will tailor their training and information dissemination activities to the CILs. We also believe that identifying existing

¹ The ADA requires state and local government to administer their services, programs, and activities in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of qualified individuals with disabilities. 28 C.F.R. 35.130(d).

promising practices will make transparent the practices and programs CILs are using to support their constituents.

This study is a primary activity of Lex Frieden (ILRU Director) and Vinh Nguyen (SWADA Director) and their research assistants. The survey was developed with the involvement of CIL staff and other experts on independent living. Results were interpreted with the help of ILRU Co-Director Richard Petty and CIL-NET Director Darrell Jones.

Study Methodology, Content, and Data Collection

The study used an electronic survey delivered through SurveyGizmo. The design provided for the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, other than a question that requested participants to identify the state in which their CIL was located. Participants may have also voluntarily provided identifiable information through their narrative responses.

Survey content was informed by SWADA's experience with providing training and TA on the ADA to CILs. The survey posed approximately 20 questions, with three core focal areas and a fourth area requesting general information about the organization (e.g., state, respondent answering the survey for the organization, and length of time in position). The main intent of the survey was to understand CILs' capacity and readiness to assist persons with disabilities, their capacity-building needs and desires, and their existing practices.

Our sampling framework included all 354 federally funded CILs in the United States. Using ILRU email lists for CILs, we sent out an electronic invitation to all members of the sample. The preferred email contact was the CIL director. The invitation included an introduction to the survey and the research team as well as an indication that the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) funded the study. The invitation also featured a clickable Web link that allowed them to immediately access the survey. The e-mail invitation indicated that alternate formats of survey materials would be made available to persons with disabilities upon request. Contact information was also provided if the sample member would like help in filling out the survey.

A total of 290 people responded to the survey. Of these responses, there were 146 (50.34%) complete responses and 144 (49.7%) partial responses. The average response rate for studies that utilize data collected from organizations is 35.7 percent (Baruch & Holtom, 2008), so this study had an above average response rate. From the follow up calls, it appears most of the remaining CIL directors were not able to complete the survey due to schedule constraints or large volume of surveys they have received via email.

Key Findings

These percentages and numbers represent the total survey respondents who are members of CILs

1. One hundred and forty-two (95.3%) of the completed responses reported that their centers provided training, information, or referrals relating to the ADA or the disability discrimination issues in general.
2. On average, an individual CIL serves 128 consumers in a month and 12 of those consumers are counseled on issues relating to the ADA or disability discrimination.
3. When asked to rate CIL staff's capacity to provide information, training, or referrals regarding the ADA's requirements:
 - a. On employment-related topics: 62 (42.5%) responses rated high and 24 responses (16.4%) rated very high
 - b. On topics related to state or local government programs and services: 74 (50.7%) responses rated high and 36 responses (24.7%) rated very high
 - c. On the topic of access to public accommodations or places that are open to the public: 67 (45.9%) submitted responses rated high and 46 (31.5%) of them rated very high

- d. On the topic of transition under *Olmstead*: 60 CILs (42.9%) rated high and 29 CILs (20.7%) rated very high
4. Of the kind of questions or requests for information that CILs received from their consumers relating to the ADA and employment:
 - a. 125 (85.6%) of the responses have received inquiries about reasonable accommodations
 - b. 106 (72.6%) have received inquiries about transportation to and from work
 - c. 90 (61.6%) have received inquiries about disability inquiries and the application process
 - d. 76 (52.1%) have received inquiries about effective communication, interpreters, or assistive communications devices
 5. Of the kind of questions or requests for information that CILs received from their consumers relating to the ADA and the state or local services and programs:
 - a. 111 (76%) of the responses have received inquiries about public transportation
 - b. 93 (63.7%) have received inquiries about architectural accessibility in public buildings
 - c. 89 (61%) have received inquiries about architectural accessibility in sidewalks
 - d. 86 (58.9%) have received inquiries about effective communication, interpreters, or assisted communications devices
 6. Of the kind of questions or requests for information that CILs received from their consumers relating to the ADA and places of public accommodations:
 - a. 112 (78.3%) of the responses have received inquiries about service animals
 - b. 100 (69.9%) have received inquiries about architectural accessibility
 - c. 82 (57.3%) have received inquiries about restaurants, bars, or other places that serve food or drinks
 - d. 72 (50.3%) have received inquiries about effective communication, interpreters, or assisted communications devices
 7. When asked about the factors that may limit the CIL's ability to provide information, training, or referrals related to the ADA and disability law:
 - a. 79 (61.2%) of the responses said that they lack staff
 - b. 44 (34.1%) shared that it was due to the unavailability of training or staff development
 - c. 36 (27.9%) suggested that their CIL did not have sufficient information about the availability of legal services or formal complaint processes
 8. Other issues related to disability that consumers reported to CILs include:
 - a. 140 (95.2%) - Housing
 - b. 125 (85%) - Federal benefits (SSI or SSDI)
 - c. 119 (81%) - Access to public or private transportation
 9. Among the responses collected from CILs, 79.6% shared that they utilize their regional ADA Center for technical assistance on the ADA, whereas 20.4% said that they do not.
 10. When it comes to the ADA National Network products or services that CILs utilized:
 - a. 64.3% say their CIL uses the ADA Checklist
 - b. 50.4% say their CIL uses the ADA National Network publications and fact sheets
 - c. 49.6% say their CIL uses the booklet, *Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals*
 - d. 46.1% say their CIL uses the ADA Anniversary Toolkit
 11. According to write-in responses, the most frequently mentioned materials or resources that would best allow CILs to expand the information, training, or referrals that they provide related to the ADA include:
 - a. Online (easy & accessible) training, webinars, and resources concerning ADA (47 mentions)
 - b. more funding (11 mentions)
 - c. easier to understand pamphlets that can be handed out (9 mentions)

12. According to write-in responses, specific programs or services that some CILs frequently provide for their consumers that are related to the ADA or disability rights that they wish to highlight:
 - a. Community advocacy training (28 mentions)
 - b. Disability awareness training (15 mentions)
 - c. Independent living services (10 mentions)
 - d. Housing information services (10 mentions)
 - e. Ensuring accessibility (9 mentions)
 - f. Training on service animals (9 mentions)
 - g. Youth Program: features ADA access rights (6 mentions)
 - h. Candidates Day (5 mentions)

Discussion

Many CILs reported a need for more information, training, and technical assistance related to the ADA and other disability rights related laws. When asked about the factors that limit their CIL's ability to provide these services to their consumers, almost 2/3 of the respondents said they had inadequate staffing to respond to such needs while over 1/3 attributed their limitations to the lack of training or staff development available to them. Twenty-eight percent reported that they did not have sufficient information about the availability of legal services or that they were not fully aware of formal complaint processes.

A majority of the responses expressed that having materials and resources pertaining specifically to ADA training, a larger number of specialized staff, and other helpful ADA reference materials would help them serve their consumers better. Almost 80% said they utilized their regional ADA Center, but may not be aware of the myriad resources that the ADA National Network (the ADA Centers collectively) produces that could address this deficit. For example, only half of the responses indicated that their CIL uses ADA National Network publications and fact sheets. Additionally, utilization of various webinar series and online courses that could increase a CIL's capacity to provide technical assistance on the ADA ranged from 13% to 40%. The numbers suggest that CILs may not be aware of these free resources offered by the ADA Centers.

These survey findings will help ILRU and the ADA National Network reconsider and revise their strategies in promoting and providing the appropriate training and resources to CILs, which can help them to better serve their consumers on ADA-related issues or concerns. The findings clearly document the CILs' needs for information about the ADA and disability rights laws that can be provided to their consumers. They also point to the need for easily accessible staff training and resources in the event of CIL leadership and staff changes.

DETAILED SUMMARY FINDINGS

Response Statistics:

	Percent	Count
Complete	50.30%	146
Partial	49.70%	144
Total	100.00%	290

1. Does your CIL provide training, information, or referrals related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or disability discrimination issues in general?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	142	95.30%
No	7	4.70%

2. On average, about how many consumers do you serve in a month?

Statistics	Consumers
Minimum	0
Maximum	3000
Sum	18,069.0
Average	128.1
Total Responses	141

3. On average, about how many consumers do you serve in a month with regards to issues relating to the ADA or disability discrimination?

Statistics	Consumers
Minimum	0
Maximum	50
Sum	1,606.0
Average	11.70
Total Responses	137

4. How would you rate your CIL staff's capacity to provide information, trainings, or referrals with the ADA's requirements regarding:

	Very Low	Low	Neutral	High	Very High	Responses
Employment	5.5%	8.2%	27.4%	42.5%	16.4%	146
State or local government programs & services	2.1%	3.4%	19.2%	50.7%	24.7%	146
Public accommodations	2.1%	4.8%	15.8%	45.9%	31.5%	146
Olmstead-related transition	4.3%	7.9%	24.3%	42.9%	20.7%	140
Total						146

5. Questions or requests CILs have received about the ADA and employment:

Question Topic	Percentage	Responses
Reasonable accommodation	85.60%	125
Transportation to and from work	72.60%	106
Disability inquiries and application process	41.80%	61
Effective communication, interpreters, or assisted communications devices	52.10%	76
Job training or education	45.90%	67
Parking	45.20%	66
Architectural accessibility in the workplace	42.50%	62
Inaccessible workplace policies and procedures	41.80%	61
Disability harassment or retaliation	33.60%	49
Termination	27.40%	40
Others	9.6%	14

6. Questions or requests CILs have received about the ADA and state or local government programs and services:

Question Topic	Percentage	Responses
Public Transportation	76.00%	111
Architectural accessibility in public buildings	63.70%	93
Architectural accessibility in sidewalks	61.00%	89
Effective communication, interpreters, or assisted communications devices	58.90%	86
Schools, community colleges, and public universities	46.60%	68
Voting	45.20%	66
Accessible parking placards	44.50%	65
Libraries, parks, and other public spaces	38.40%	56
Public clinics or hospitals	33.60%	49
Recreation and athletic programs	32.90%	48
Public Utilities and tax	10.3%	15

7. Questions or requests CILs have received about the ADA and public accommodations:

Question Topic	Percentage	Responses
Service animals	78.30%	112
Architectural accessibility	69.90%	100

Restaurants, bars, or other places that serve food or drinks	57.30%	82
Effective communication, interpreters, or assisted communications devices	50.30%	72
Private transportation provider	48.30%	69
Hotels and other places of lodging	41.30%	59
Retail or grocery stores	36.40%	52
Theaters and entertainment	35.00%	50
Private clinics or hospital	24.50%	35
Private schools or universities	17.50%	25
Others	4.20%	6

8. The factors that limit the CIL's ability to provide information, training, or referrals related to the ADA and disability law:

Questions Topic	Percentage	Responses
Lack of staff	61.20%	79
Unavailability of training or staff development	34.10%	44
Insufficient information about the availability of legal services or formal complaint processes	27.90%	36
Lack of programs or presentations by outside organizations	24.80%	32
Insufficient materials or literature	21.70%	28
Insufficient information about the specific requirements of the ADA	21.70%	28
Lack of information on local events or presentations	18.60%	24
Other	18.60%	24
Lack of information about local, state, or federal services	14.70%	19

9. Has your CIL utilized your regional ADA Center for technical assistance on the ADA?

	Responses	Percentage
Yes	113	79.58%
No	29	20.42%

10. Ways CILs provide information about the ADA:

Ways Information are provided	Percentage	Responses
One-on-one counseling	82.60%	119
Printed materials and pamphlets	68.80%	99

Training programs or presentations	63.20%	91
Information on events or presentations in the community	61.80%	89
Referral to other programs and services	54.90%	79

11) Other issues related to disability encountered frequently by CILs:

Issues	Percentage	Responses
Housing	95.20%	140
Federal benefits (SSI or SSDI)	85.00%	125
Access to public or private transportation	81.00%	119
Public health insurance (Medicare or Medicaid)	74.10%	109
Personal assistance services	71.40%	105
State benefits (cash benefits, SNAP/food stamps, etc.)	62.60%	92
Private health insurance	19.70%	29
Others	12.20%	18

12.) Other topics CILs believe they can take on more with supplemental training and/or resources:

Issues	Percentage	Responses
Housing	63.60%	84
State benefits (cash benefits, SNAP/food stamps, etc.)	52.30%	69
Federal benefits (SSI or SSDI)	50.00%	66
Access to public or private transportation	47.70%	63
Public health insurance (Medicare or Medicaid)	47.70%	63
Personal assistance services	44.70%	59
Private health insurance	37.10%	49
Others	12.10%	16

13.) ADA National Network products or services that CIL utilized regarding ADA and disability law:

Products/Services	Percentage	Responses
ADA Checklist	64.30%	74
ADA National Network publications and factsheets	50.40%	58
Service Animals and Emotional Support Animals (booklet)	49.60%	57
ADA Anniversary Toolkit	46.10%	53

Emergency Preparedness (webinars & podcasts)	40.00%	46
Accessible Technology Webinar Series	39.10%	45
ADA Basic Building Blocks (web course)	35.70%	41
Disability Law Handbook	34.80%	40
ADA Title I Employment Requirements (web course)	25.20%	29
ADA Title II Action Guide for State and Local Governments	25.20%	29
ADA Audio Conference Series	24.30%	28
ADA Legal Webinar Series	23.50%	27
National ADA Symposium	23.50%	27
Overview of Disability Rights (web course)	23.50%	27
Hospitality & Disability	19.10%	22
ADA Trainer Network	18.30%	21
Architectural Accessibility Laws (web course)	15.70%	18
At Your Service: Welcoming Customers with Disabilities (web course)	15.70%	18
ADA Case Law Database	13.90%	16
ADA Live! (online radio and podcast)	13.90%	16
ADA Title II Tutorial (web course)	13%	15
AccessibleTech.org	7.80%	9
HR Tips	7%	8

References

Baruch, Y., & Holtom, B. C. (2008). Survey response rate levels and trends in organizational research. *Human Relations*, 61(8), 1139–1160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726708094863>

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