

Effective Social Media Practices and Platforms

Social media can be a creative and effective way to engage with consumers and other CIL stakeholders. If you do not already have a strong organizational online presence, this fact sheet may provide you with some helpful suggestions for getting started. Selecting platforms can be difficult with so many choices, but try to be active on at least three or four. Although developing content and responding to comments can be time-consuming, this fact sheet will help you choose platforms, create content, manage and track responses, and find resources.

Why should CILs and SILCs be active on social media?

- Offers an excellent way to reach rural, distant, remote, or quarantined populations. Most consumers have smartphones and are often online. Meet them where they are.
- Provides people with the information, tools, and resources that they can use to receive services, spread your message, learn about what is happening, or contribute to your cause.
- Drives people to online and in-person activities, programs and events; and provides reminders.
- Offers a way to learn what consumers, family members, staff, partners, legislators, and the general public think, (polls/surveys, hashtags (#), links, questions, discussions, etc.).
- Strengthens peer support and increases contact between consumers.
- Increases trust and credibility, builds relationships, and expands awareness of your services.

Which platforms work well to reach consumers?

- Try to identify which platforms your consumers use and interact with most. Some of the most popular include Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Snapchat, and WhatsApp. New platforms are introduced frequently, and you need to be aware of relevant ones.
- Make your center easy to find, both physically and online. Maps are helpful, especially if you have multiple offices. Post links on your website, newsletter, blog and other materials.
- Your followers will differ by platform, so try to be active on several. Here are some examples from CILs across the nation:
 - Center for Independence of the Disabled, NY
 - [Website](https://www.cidny.org/) (https://www.cidny.org/)
 - [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/CIDNYInc/) (www.facebook.com/CIDNYInc/)
 - [Twitter](https://twitter.com/CID_NY) (https://twitter.com/CID_NY)
 - [Instagram](http://www.instagram.com/cid_ny/) (www.instagram.com/cid_ny/)
 - [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/cidnyinc/) (https://www.linkedin.com/company/cidnyinc/)
 - [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI0eMkvGCPLf13hzvYXZCVg) (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI0eMkvGCPLf13hzvYXZCVg)

- The Ability Center
 - [Twitter](https://twitter.com/abilitycntr) (https://twitter.com/abilitycntr)
 - [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/abilitycenter) (https://www.facebook.com/abilitycenter)
 - [Pinterest](https://www.pinterest.com/abilitycenter/) (https://www.pinterest.com/abilitycenter/)
- Alliance Center for Independence
 - [Website](https://www.adacil.org/) (https://www.adacil.org/)
 - [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/alliancecenterforindependence) (https://www.facebook.com/alliancecenterforindependence)
 - [Twitter](https://twitter.com/aci629) (https://twitter.com/aci629)
 - [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/aci629/) (https://www.instagram.com/aci629/)
 - [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/alliance-center-for-independence/) (https://www.linkedin.com/company/alliance-center-for-independence/)
- Granite State Independent Living
 - [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GraniteStateIndependentLiving) (https://www.facebook.com/GraniteStateIndependentLiving)
 - [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/granitestateil/) (https://www.instagram.com/granitestateil/)
 - [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/user/gsilnh2012) (https://www.youtube.com/user/gsilnh2012)
 - [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/granite-state-independent-living-gsil-/) (https://www.linkedin.com/company/granite-state-independent-living-gsil-/)
 - [Twitter](https://twitter.com/GraniteStateIL) (https://twitter.com/GraniteStateIL)

How can CILs use social media to connect with consumers?

- **Facebook** — Post photos, videos, stories, and info about resources, events, and programs. Start/join discussions and polls. Create groups or pages. Pay to advertise/boost events. Monitor posts and respond. Like, follow, comment, and share. More shares, more seen.
- **Twitter** — Post services, events, links, trending topics, hashtags#, surveys, and news.
- **YouTube** — Post captioned videos of enthusiastic consumers talking about your CIL, activities, opportunities, services, and events. This is a good platform for training videos, too.
- **Instagram** — Visual app where CILs can post photos, videos, stories, events, and links.
- **Pinterest** — Virtual bulletin board/scrapbook on pinboards. Post info, photos, GIFs, and videos about services, stories, advocacy, programs, and resources.
- **WhatsApp** — Free, fast, and secure text messaging and voice/video calls to connect, notify or inform consumers. Can share images, documents, user locations, and other media.
- **Snapchat** — Popular app good for reaching youth with temporary photos and videos.
- **LinkedIn** — Professional networking site where CILs can share information, build community, increase awareness, join groups, recruit, fundraise, and make connections.
- **Meetup** — Create groups around shared interests, support, dinner/coffee, events, etc.
- **Blogs** — Share interesting stories, resources, info, and photos about consumers, current issues, activities, services, and events, etc. on a regular basis. See Blogger

[Blogger](https://www.blogger.com/about/?bpli=1) (https://www.blogger.com/about/?bpli=1) and WordPress [WordPress](https://wordpress.com/create-blog/) (https://wordpress.com/create-blog/).

Social media is most productive when you post and respond often. Re-evaluate regularly for relevance.

How do CILs create the best relevant content?

- Think about what draws people to your center: to receive needed services or equipment; find information and resources; learn IL, leadership or advocacy skills; advocate for services or legislation, express themselves; meet friends with similar interests; give or receive peer support; participate in activities; be entertained; etc.
- Figure out how to help consumers solve some of their wants, needs, challenges, fears and goals. What do you want them to do? Learn about and receive services, share/spread your message, advocate for a cause, attend an event, interact with others, or something else?
- To make your content appealing, frame issues as personal and relevant. People listen to people. Let consumers tell their own stories.
- Connect consumers to the causes, people, events, and groups they care about.
- Engage viewers emotionally through stories and current events. Video may be the most engaging content for Instagram and Facebook. Photos are good at drawing interest too. Utilizing commonly used hashtags (#) can help increase your reach on platforms.
- Write catchy or witty headlines and captions to draw more interest.
- Create live events to inform, update, educate, and grow your audience.
- Post and respond regularly, and include a call to action when you can. Social media is about collaboration and two-way conversations.
- Create the best relevant content tailored for each platform. Although you can repeat and repost content, use the right language and format for each platform.
- Post your platform links on your website, newsletters, flyers, marketing materials, blogs, etc.
- Ensure that your website, social media platforms, and communications are accessible.

How can CILs manage and track social media accounts?

Use a free (usually more limited options) or low-cost social media engagement tool that helps analyze which posts are working, schedule and recycle posts across multiple platforms, and monitor comments, messages, and mentions, among other services.

- [Zoho Social](https://www.zoho.com/social/) (https://www.zoho.com/social/)
- [HubSpot](https://www.hubspot.com/) (https://www.hubspot.com/)
- [SmarterQueue](https://smarterqueue.com/) (https://smarterqueue.com/)
- [Hootsuite](https://hootsuite.com/) (https://hootsuite.com/)
- [Buffer](https://buffer.com/) (https://buffer.com/)
- Some platforms also offer their own management and tracking tools including [Tweetdeck](http://www.tweetdeck.com) (www.tweetdeck.com) and Facebook Pages Manager.

Websites and social media

- Make sure that your website is accessible, clean, clear, and organized. See the links below.
- Display social media links and share / follow buttons prominently on your website.
- Post current and trending resource information (such as COVID-19 updates) on your website and social media platforms. Consumers, staff, and service providers need access to available updated community resources. Stay connected with community announcements and update the changing resource list frequently.

Where can I find more information?

- [Using Social Media to Enhance Community Participation Guide](http://www.tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/SMCP.pdf)
<http://www.tucollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/SMCP.pdf>
- [Accessibility for Social Media Fact Sheet](https://www.ilru.org/accessibility-for-social-media) <https://www.ilru.org/accessibility-for-social-media>
- [Creating accessible content for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter](https://accessibility.umn.edu/what-you-can-do/create-accessible-content/social-media)
<https://accessibility.umn.edu/what-you-can-do/create-accessible-content/social-media>
- [Pros and cons of social media management applications](https://www.lifewire.com/social-media-apps-for-managing-everything-3486302)
<https://www.lifewire.com/social-media-apps-for-managing-everything-3486302>
- [Strategies for posting across platforms](https://blog.hootsuite.com/cross-promote-social-media/) <https://blog.hootsuite.com/cross-promote-social-media/>
- [How to Create a Social Media Marketing Plan](https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/) <https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/>
- [Research on social media usage](https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/) <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/>



A publication of Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU), developed in collaboration with Utah State University Center for Persons with Disabilities. Support for development of this publication was provided by the U.S. Administration for Community Living, Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201 under grant number 90ILTA0001. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.

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