

Frequently Asked Questions

Who makes up the SILC?

Does the SILC need statewide representation?

Yes. The Rehabilitation Act requires that SILCs must have members that provide statewide representation. The SILC must work to ensure that there is recruitment and representation from across the state and not just in the region of the capitol where the SILC is typically located.

Does disability matter?

Yes. The SILC is required to have representation from a broad range of individuals with different disabilities. SILCs should be aware of the types of disabilities that are represented and look to recruit members that represent disability types that are not represented or are underrepresented on the SILC. In order for the SILC to be a voice for all people with disabilities within the state, work must be done to include diverse disability types and backgrounds.

What about diversity of the SILC?

Diversity on the SILC is an important part of representing the disability community in the state. SILCs should regularly be looking at the membership and asking themselves what voices are not being represented – race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Having conversations with SILC members about how to reach out to groups that have been historically underrepresented is important to the recognition of the need to be more inclusive and how to do better.

Do members have to know about CILs and IL Services?

Yes. Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are able to help identify candidates for the SILC from individuals they have served, as well as board members and staff. Not every new member joining the SILC will know everything there is to know about CILs, and sometimes the Governor or other appointing authority, will make appointments of people that have never been to or heard of a CIL. For this reason, the SILC is required to provide opportunities for regular training to SILC members. Through the orientation and training process, the members will begin learning more about Independent Living Services and CILs. And SILCs are required to have individual training plans for all council members to ensure they gain the knowledge and information they need to be effective SILC members.

What about consumer-control?

Like CILs, the SILC must also have a consumer-controlled board. To simplify, a majority of the members of the SILC must be individuals with significant disabilities that are not employed by a CIL or any state agency.

This is broken down into two parts:

1. The majority of ALL members, voting and non-voting, must be individuals with significant disabilities not employed by a CIL or the state; and
2. The majority of the voting members of the SILC must be individuals with significant disabilities not employed by a CIL or the state.

Who else is required to be on the SILC?

Aside from the requirement of a majority of members being individuals with significant disabilities not employed by a CIL or a state agency, there are a few additional requirements for membership.

1. As a voting member, there must be a CIL director that is chosen by the CILs in the state. This member is often referred to as the CIL representative and they do just that. They help to provide a voice for all the CILs in the matters discussed and dealt with by the SILC, without the CILs having a majority to make all the decisions or control the SILC. This structure allows for the CIL and SILC partnership to be maintained, while giving the CILs a seat at the table.
2. As a voting member, for a State in which one or more centers for independent living are run by, or in conjunction with, the governing bodies of American Indian tribes located on Federal or State reservations, at least one representative of the directors of such centers. Similar to the first CIL Rep, these members are required when CILs are operated by or with American Indian tribes to give voices to the populations they serve.
3. As a non-voting member, a representative from the Designated State Entity. Additional members as non-voting members from state agencies that provide services to individuals with disabilities.
4. May include additional members such as other representatives from CILs, individuals with disabilities, parents or guardians, advocates, representatives from private business, and service providers.

What does “ex-officio” mean and what is their role?

“Ex-officio” means members “by virtue of the position they hold”. For the SILC, the ex-officio members are those individuals that are designated by the DSE and other State Agencies and ex-officio members of the SILC are non-voting. They are still important members of the SILC because they can provide current information from their agencies on how they are serving people with disabilities, they can help identify partnerships between their agency and the SILC or CILs, and very importantly, they can hear the concerns addressed from the SILC, take them back to their agency, and be part of the solution. Having ex-officio members helps to bring more awareness of the IL philosophy into state government and has the potential for the SILC to be included in some of their work, as well as increased opportunities for systems advocacy.

It is also important to note ex-officio members are non-voting for a reason, to keep IL philosophy and consumer control strong within the SILC. If they were voting members, they would have the potential to control decisions that should be made by the individuals with disabilities on the SILC. It is vital to keep the balance of the ex-officio members providing input and participating, but not controlling the conversation.

Ex-officio members are generally not appointed or elected – but the Rehab Act requires SILC ex-officio members to be appointed and to be subject to term limits.

Can CIL directors and staff be on the SILC?

Yes. As noted before at least one CIL director must be on the SILC at all times, and other CIL director or staff membership is allowed. While you can have more CIL employees, you must also remember, even if they have a significant disability, they can never be counted as part of the required majority of people with disabilities.

And on the Executive Committee of the SILC?

CIL directors and staff are voting members of the SILC and therefore may absolutely serve in leadership roles if elected by the voting members. It is possible that conflicts of interest may occur and if that happens, CIL members should declare the conflict and not participate in the discussion or decision making for that specific matter, following the SILCs policies.

What about CIL Board members?

Yes. CIL board members, especially those with significant disabilities, are excellent candidates for SILC membership. CIL board members come in with great background knowledge of CILs and IL Services, as well as knowing the issues within their local community. Since they are not paid staff of the CIL, they can be counted in the majority of people with disabilities.

Who selects members to the SILC?

The Rehabilitation Act includes the requirement for the appointing authority within the state to make the appointments to the SILC. This is true whether the SILC is a non-profit or has some other structure. In most cases, the appointing authority is the Governor but there are a few cases where it is a different entity.

Because of this requirement, the SILC must maintain a good relationship with the entity that makes appointments. The SILC is required to be in contact with the appointing authority in regard to the SILC appointments and composition at least annually.

Can the SILC help find potential members?

Yes! In fact, the SILC is required to have written policies and procedures for recruiting members, reviewing applications, and regularly providing recommendations for eligible appointments to the Governor or

appointing authority. If the SILC reaches out and develops a relationship with the appointing authority, they will be likely to work closely with the SILC on the appointment process to ensure compliance with the composition requirements of the SILC. The SILC can share the processes they use to recruit, review, and recommend candidates with the appointing authority and in most cases, they will welcome the recommendation of the candidates.

How many members is a SILC required to have?

There is no specific minimum set in law other than based on the required composition and the required majority of people with disabilities. Assuming a SILC has CIL representative and three ex-officio members, the SILC would need at least five additional voting members with significant disabilities. In most cases, the amount of SILC members is dependent on the SILC bylaws or on the legislation or executive order that created the SILC in the state. It is important to know what the required number, or minimum or potential maximum number, for membership on the SILC is.