

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)?

Where did the SILC come from?

In the late 1980s, all states receiving Independent Living (IL) funding from the federal government were required to have an Independent Living Advisory Council. While the councils were required to have a majority of members with disabilities, the Council had no authority. The Designated State Unit (DSU) was responsible for developing the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL), but only required to consider input from the Advisory Council the same as any other public input.

Due to the growth of Independent Living across the country, advocates across the nation felt that all IL programs should be conducted with consumer control. And not all the programs operated with SPIL funds (now Part B) were. The Advisory Councils could provide that consumer control, but they needed to be strengthened and have real authority.

In 1992, those advocates were heard and in the reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 (the Act) the Statewide Independent Living Councils were established with joint responsibility and authority for the SPIL. Since that time the DSE's role in developing the SPIL has been reduced and the SILC and CILs develop it jointly with input from others in the state including the DSE.

Why Are SILCs important?

While within each state there can be a different number of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and different state agencies acting as the Designated State Entity (DSE), there is only one Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). There are 56 SILCs representing all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the six US territories.

Every SILC is responsible for helping to bring the voices of all people with disabilities in their states to the development of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). SILCs are responsible for identifying the needs of the disability community and to work with the CILs to create a coordinated plan to address those needs and to improve services and systems for the larger disability community.

Is every SILC the same?

No, not every SILC operates the same way. Many are nonprofits, while others operate through partner organizations and some are formed other manners. Some SILCs have multiple staff to fulfill their duties, some may have one staff, and some do not have staff of their own.

What is the same, is that every SILC has an Appointing Authority, typically the Governor, that appoints the members of the Council. A majority of all members (and of voting members) must be individuals with significant disabilities that do not work for a CIL or a state agency. One CIL director, chosen by CILs to represent the CILs, is a required voting member. Members from state agencies that work with individuals with disabilities are non-voting (*ex officio*) members.

But what does a SILC have to do?

Every SILC is required to do the following:

- Develop the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL)
- Monitor, review, and evaluate the implementation of the SPIL
- Have regular meetings, open to the public
- Submit periodic reporting
- Coordinate activities with other entities in the state

The SILC also may do the following:

- Work and coordinate with CILs
- Conduct resource development
- Perform other functions, like systems advocacy, that are consistent with the Law

The SILC can never directly provide or manage Independent Living Services.

Is the SILC in charge of the CILs?

No! The SILC is not in charge of or in an oversight role of the CILs. Many times when individuals first hear about a SILC that is their first thought. The SILC has no authority to monitor the operations or compliance of the CILs. That role is only done by the Administration on Community Living (ACL), or the DSE for Part B funds. The SILC and CILs within a state are partners, all on the same level, and none has power over another but should support each other.

It is the partnership of the SILC and CILs in a state that truly creates an IL Network that is collaborative and works for the betterment of all individuals with disabilities.

How do I find out more about my SILC?

All SILCs hold regular meetings that are open to the public which you can attend and hear what is happening within your state. You can look up information on your SILC by [clicking here](#). After learning more, you can contact your SILC to find out about opportunities to become more involved whether it is joining mailing lists, participating in committees, providing input and feedback on the SPIL, participating in public forums, or becoming a Council Member.