



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

TO: ACCES Committee
FROM: Kevin G. Smith
SUBJECT: Independent Living Centers (ILCs)
DATE: August 23, 2011
AUTHORIZATION(S):

SUMMARY

Issue for Discussion

The Regents will be informed about the action being taken by Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) in collaboration with the Independent Living Center (ILC) network to increase access to independent living opportunities for individuals with disabilities in New York State.

Reason for Consideration

Independent Living Centers are essential partners in the State Education Department's efforts to prepare individuals with disabilities for college, careers, and community-based lifestyles based on informed choices. To ensure more effective management and service delivery, ACCES-VR will continue to engage the ILC network in the development of improved methods for monitoring program outcomes and fiscal reporting. In addition, ACCES-VR will work with the field according to statute and regulation to improve the procurement and contract process.

Proposed Handling

This item will come before the Committee at its September 2011 meeting for discussion.

Background Information

In the early 1970s, Americans with disabilities across the nation rejected a medical model that had traditionally relegated individuals with a disability to "patient status" and instead embraced a movement of validation and empowerment. A key

milestone for this disability rights movement was the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which transformed the nation's public vocational rehabilitation service delivery system and introduced Section 504 that, for the first time, prohibited discrimination against citizens with a disability by any entity receiving federal funds. These successes were soon followed by federal funding to establish independent living centers nationwide.

The first ILC in New York State was the Center for the Independence of the Disabled in New York (CIDNY) in Manhattan founded in 1978. Today, New York leads the nation with 39 state-funded Independent Living Centers operating in 36 counties with a commitment of \$12 million. An additional \$4 million in federal funding expands the statewide independent living network to an additional ten counties with 51 total physical sites. (See site map attached.) All ILCs are governed by a board of directors comprised of a majority of people with disabilities who set policy and direction for the organization with most direct services provided by qualified peer counselors who are individuals with disabilities. This network of independent living centers is the only consumer-driven services network in New York State.

Independent Living Services

In SFY 2010-11, the statewide independent living network served over 83,000 New Yorkers. Center staffs represent individuals with a wide range of disabilities who draw on their personal experience with leading self-directed lives and share independent living resources, strategies and culture.

ILC staff assist people with disabilities and their families in navigating complex service systems through peer counseling; information and referral; independent living and life skills training; benefits planning and advisement; housing assistance and individual and systems advocacy. Annually, over 8000 public and private businesses statewide receive assistance in meeting the needs of customers with disabilities. Increasingly, independent living centers are diverting youth and adults with significant disabilities from nursing homes and other segregated settings and assisting with the transition to community living. ACCES-VR estimates that through these efforts independent living centers save New York an average of over \$100 million annually by facilitating access to less costly community-based options.

Systems Advocacy and Partnerships

The statewide independent living network has been actively engaged in systems advocacy for nearly three decades to ensure that virtually all major federal legislation stress full inclusion, informed choice and greater accountability to consumers of services. This framework has made the prospect of achieving independent living a reality for individuals on all levels.

On the state and local level, ILCs have advanced accessible public transportation, enhanced accessible and affordable housing opportunities, the NYS Medicaid Buy-In Program, consumer-directed personal assistance services and Medicaid waiver programs, among others. In total, decades of systems advocacy has

resulted in a comprehensive set of legal protections and service options available to New Yorkers with disabilities.

ACCES-VR is also proud of its strong working relationship with several important partners in systems change including the National Council of Independent Living (NCIL) and the New York Association on Independent Living (NYAIL), the Independent Living Network of New York (ILNYY), the New York State Council on Independent Living (NYSILC) and the NYS Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council (MISCC). Pursuant to the Supreme Court decision in Olmstead vs. LC, the MISCC is an interagency body charged with developing a comprehensive plan to provide a broad range of disabilities supports in the most integrated settings which will allow individuals with disabilities to remain in the community.

For a more complete breakdown of people served by ILCs and annual inventories of outcomes of community and systems change efforts by ILCs, see the ILC Toolbox at <http://www.acces.nysed.gov/vr/lisn/ilc/toolbox.html>.

SED Partnerships

ILCs have cultivated and maintained strong partnerships with State Education Department (SED) programs to ensure equal access for individuals with disabilities. Examples of such relationships include:

- ACCES-VR District Offices – Through SED’s Unified Contract Services (UCS) system, ILCs can provide an array of supported employment services and other peer driven contracted services, such as: vocational rehabilitation orientations, work readiness supports and benefits counseling.
- Adult Education – Literacy Zones -- ILCs are active partners with the ACCES Literacy Zone network that serves low and very low income families and promotes access to pathways out of poverty.
- P-12 Special Education –
 - ILCs work with P-12 Special Education on programs such as the Special Education Parent Centers and the Early Childhood Direction Center networks.
 - ILCs will continue the partnerships developed with school districts during the Model Transition Programs (MTP) initiative to improve transition planning for students with disabilities.

ACCES-VR’s consumers are benefiting from the work accomplished by these partnerships with ILCs. We will continue to collaborate with P-12 Special Education to improve transition planning for students with disabilities. Collectively, we need to analyze the merits of these investments in order to create systems which employ the best use of human and fiscal resources.

Program Expansion

ILCs have been highly effective over the years in diversifying their funding base by administering a range of complementary services that typically target specific populations and are often time-limited. ACCES-VR will continue to promote ILC cross systems service expansion through the following:

- Medicaid Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Programs whereby ILCs act as a fiscal intermediary to allow consumers to hire, train, schedule and maintain their own personal care support system, rather than rely on a service delivery home care system that is based on a medical model;
- Medicaid Home and Community Based Support Services whereby ILC staff with requisite credentials provide or facilitate access to services for residents in nursing homes, or intermediate care facilities, for consumers with developmental disabilities, traumatic brain injuries and other physical disabilities to live in the community rather than an institutional setting;
- Assistive Technology Act Programming whereby ILCs are providers of Technology Resources to Assist Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID) to match people with disabilities with high and low technology solutions for independent living; and
- Peer Bridges or peer advocates at ILCs work on behalf of county offices of mental health to reduce psychiatric hospitalizations, provide impartial support during crises, and promote self-advocacy and independent living skill development.

Increased Accountability and Next Steps

Over the next year ACCES-VR will work with the State Independent Living Council and trade associations to:

- Develop more rigorous statewide performance standards and outcome based contractual obligations; and
- Provide technical support for independent living leadership development including managers and board members and structured training programs for ILC staff.

Current efforts are underway to more accurately measure program outcomes and the impact ILCs have on the lives of New Yorkers with disabilities. Through improved independent living information technology and data collection capacity, ACCES-VR will more accurately identify opportunities, gaps in services and under-performing centers. These systems will also allow ACCES-VR to more effectively demonstrate the potential cost savings independent living services represent for the state.

ACCES-VR is committed to developing a more substantial role for the statewide independent living network in the areas of diversion and transition from institutional settings to community living. We recognize the important role independent living centers can play in the transition of school-age youth to adult education, vocational training and careers. ILCs provide critical supports that enhance the success of students and adults and ultimately lead to successful employment outcomes.

Recommendations

ACCES-VR seeks Board of Regents support for our efforts to better engage Independent Living Centers (ILCs) all across New York State. The ILC asset can be built and improved upon through even better communication, process and planning. ACCES-VR will report back on progress toward these important goals.

Attachment

**Wherever you live in New York State,
you live close to Independent Living Services...**

- ◆ State Funded Independent Living Center Locations
- ◆ State Funded Satellite Independent Living Center Locations
- ◆ State & Federal Funded Independent Living Center Locations
- ◆ Federal Only Funded Independent Living Center Locations

