

The Wabash Independent Living
and Learning Center, INC.



*Empowering People with Disabilities
in West Central Indiana*

CONSUMER HANDBOOK

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Purpose of this Handbook

This handbook provides an overview of The WILL Center's history and the Independent Living philosophy. Our background has shaped who we are today and the services we provide. It will explain all the services we offer. It also outlines eligibility criteria, service delivery methods, and your rights and responsibilities as a participant.

Mission Statement

To empower people with disabilities to ensure that they have full and complete access to community and resources to promote their independence.

This mission is being implemented through the operation of a consumer-controlled, community –based, cross-disability, non-residential, non-profit corporation that is designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provides an array of Independent Living Services.

History of The WILL Center

The Wabash Independent Living and Learning Center Inc., (d.b.a. The WILL Center) is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) established on July 14, 2000. The WILL Center initially received funding in July 2000 to provide Independent Living Services to the underserved population residing in West Central Indiana. Our services are provided free of charge to any person with any type of significant disability to help them become integrated into the mainstream of society. We accomplish this by providing one-on-

one, in-depth services and advocating for changes that promote equal access and opportunity.

In doing so, we help people:

1. Return to the community from nursing homes and institutions.
2. Access essential health care, transportation, and adaptive equipment.
3. Obtain information needed to make informed choices.
4. Accomplish the goals that they establish.

We work toward creating communities that are inclusive of all citizens. The goal of The WILL Center is to increase the independence and inclusion of all people with disabilities by providing the core services of independent living. We seek to remove attitudes, policies, and programs that foster dependence and treat people with disabilities as helpless victims.

Independent Living (IL) Philosophy

The IL Philosophy can be best understood in two key components. The first is the belief that a person with a disability has the right to control and direct his/ her own life. This person should only be limited in carrying out this right in the way that a person without a disability is limited. Controlling and directing one's own life means making lifestyle choices from acceptable options. These choices should reduce a person's physical and/or psychological dependence upon others when making decisions and performing everyday activities. This means exercising the greatest possible degree of choice about where to live, with whom to live, how to live, and how to use time. It includes taking risks

and exercising the right to succeed or fail and taking responsibility for your decisions and actions. Being able to control and direct one's own life leads to self-determination and independence.

The second part of the IL Philosophy is the belief that a person with a disability has the right to actively participate in all aspects of community life to any extent he/she chooses. This means having opportunities to fulfill a range of social roles including working, owning a home, raising a family, and engaging in leisure and recreation activities. It also includes asserting one's rights and fulfilling one's responsibilities as a citizen.

History of the Independent Living Movement

During the 1960s, along with other civil rights movements, people with disabilities who wanted to take control of their own lives initiated the independent living movement. Although there were similar pockets of these groups across the country, Berkley is considered the birthplace of the movement.

Ed Roberts and several other students with severe disabilities attended classes at the University of California in Berkley. Due to a lack of accessible housing, the university forced them to live in a hospital. They formed a group called 'The Rolling Quads' to discuss ways to improve the quality of their lives and to remove themselves from this segregated environment. They felt that they were "Consumers", not patients, and that they had a right to live in the community like able-bodied people.

This group soon opened a program office. Within a year, off-campus consumers were a sizeable proportion of those seeking services. This interest from consumers prompted Roberts and his associates to establish a Center for Independent Living (CIL) for the community at large. This was the beginning of the CIL model incorporating consumer-control, self-help, self-advocacy, and community advocacy as its fundamental principles.

These successful consumer efforts, together with the recognition that services were needed outside the parameters of the traditional Vocational Rehabilitation Program, prompted the addition of Title VII to the Rehabilitation Act. Title VII provides funding for CILS and IL services. Today, hundreds of nationwide programs offer a range of IL services to help consumers achieve their goals, including the Wabash Independent Living and Learning Center, INC (The WILL Center, INC.)

Centers for Independent Living (CILS)

CILS are the primary organizational advocacy and service delivery systems that promote the Independent Living Movement and its philosophy. The primary mission is to empower all people with disabilities to live more independently and have control over their own lives. CILS are defined by the Federal Government as consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, non-residential, private, non-profit agencies. They are designed and operated within local communities by people with disabilities and provide a range of services to consumers and the community. Many of these characteristics separate CILS from the traditional

service delivery programs, so they have been explained below to help you understand the major differences.

Cross-Disability: CILS offer and provide their services to people with a range of significant disabilities. They cannot require that people have a specific significant disability for them to receive services.

Consumer-Controlled: CILS place authority and power in people with disabilities (Consumers). This includes people who are currently receiving services or those who have received services in the past. A CIL governing board must be composed of a majority of people with significant disabilities. Staff, including decision makers, must be made up of a majority of people with disabilities. CILs empower consumers to make decisions about and control the services that they receive, and goals that they set. CILS use the concept of consumers assisting other consumers via support or role modeling when providing services instead of the traditional medical (professional/patient) model of service delivery.

Non-Residential: CILS do not operate or manage housing as a separate service. However, housing can be provided to consumers for them to receive another independent living service. It cannot last any longer than eight weeks during any six-month period. Also, if a CIL does provide housing, it must be non-essential to its overall operation.

Community-Based: People with disabilities in the local community that it serves design and operate the CIL. For example, the make-up of its governing board should reflect the

composition of the community. The CIL should be part of the community that it serves, not separate from it. This community involvement is very important because CILS across the nation do not have a single goal or measure of success. Instead, each CIL responds to the unmet needs and goals of its own community. This is done by providing direct services to consumers, referral to other community resources, and community activities that cause physical and attitudinal changes.

Provision of Center Services

Service Area:

The WILL Center primarily serves consumers and communities in West Central Indiana. The six counties included in this area are Vigo, Clay, Putnam, Parke, Owen, and Vermillion.

Program Eligibility:

You must be determined eligible for the Independent Living Program. The following Federal guidelines are used to determine your eligibility. You must be a person with a significant physical, mental, cognitive, or sensory impairment that substantially limits your ability to function independently in your family or community, or to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment. The delivery of services must be to help improve your ability to function, continue functioning, or move toward functioning independently in your family or community or to continued employment. If you and your independent living Coordinator determine that both statements are true, you will be eligible for services.

Access Requirements:

All center programs are conducted in accessible facilities. Written materials relating to center programs, services, and activities are produced and alternative formats, as requested by consumers. Amplification devices and/or interpreter services are provided to consumers, as needed, for participation in center programs, services and activities. The center also maintains text telephones that are operational and provides staff training relating to their use.

Case Coordination:

The center uses a system of case coordination to ensure you receive appropriate services. When you apply for services, an independent living coordinator is assigned to work with you based on those areas of expertise and your primary service needs.

Your independent living coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the center provides appropriate services you need in a timely manner. If you have questions or need additional information, assistance, or services, you always have a specific center staff member that you can contact. Case coordination also allows the center to quickly identify and resolve any problems that might develop while we are providing services.

Independent Living Plan (ILP):

Any service that you receive from the center, other than information and referral, must be provided in agreement with an independent living plan (ILP). The only time this is different is if

you knowingly and voluntarily sign the waiver stating that an ILP is not necessary. It is your right, as a consumer of the CIL to either have an ILP or to sign a waiver. You must do one or the other to receive services.

An ILP contains several elements. It shows the expected length of your entire service program, the goals and objectives you want to achieve, the specific services that you will receive, and how long you will receive them. If you want to have an ILP, it must be jointly developed and agreed to by you and your independent living coordinator. If you are receiving services under an individualized written rehabilitation program or an individualized education program, your ILP and the services you receive from the center must be coordinated to the maximum extent possible with them to avoid service duplication. Your ILP must be in writing, signed by you or your legally authorized representative and your case coordinator, and dated. After your ILP has been developed, you, or your legally authorized representative, must be given a copy of it.

At any time, you or your legally authorized representative can review your ILP. If it is necessary, you can jointly redevelop it with your case coordinator and agree by signature to its terms. Your ILP must be reviewed on an annual basis in order to determine whether services should be continued, modified, or discontinued. If any amendments or changes are made to your ILP, you, or your legally authorized representative, must be given an accessible copy of it.

Consumer Service Driven Goals

Even if you sign the waiver stating that an ILP is unnecessary, you and your independent living coordinator still have to jointly develop service delivery goals in order to ensure that you receive all the services you need and to evaluate the effectiveness of the center's services.

Direct Consumer Services

As a CIL, all center programs and services are designed to assist you in getting the skills, knowledge, and support you need so you can function at your highest level of independence and advocate for your own needs. Once you have these things, the center encourages you to live as independently as you can. Center staff and volunteers will not engage in activities on your behalf if you can perform them independently, with natural support or existing community support. Whenever possible, you will be included in individual and systems advocacy activities undertaken on your behalf.

The Center offers five independent living core services: information and referral, individual and systems advocacy, independent living skills training, peer support and transition. A variety of other services are also available to help you increase your self-determination, achieve your personal goals, and become a more effective member of your family and community. Once eligible for center services, you can receive any service, or combination of services, that you and your independent living coordinator agree to.

The following is a list and short description of those services.

1. **Individual Advocacy:** Individual Advocacy is pleading a person's cause or speaking supporting or writing in support of that person's cause. Sometimes a person with a disability has difficulty getting benefits and services or accessing the community programs that he or she may be entitled to. Our focus will be to assist you and to help yourself in these situations by learning to advocate effectively for yourself. You will find these principles of "Self Help" and "Self-Advocacy" at the core of all your interactions with the center. Center staff will be there to support you in your efforts and can advocate on your behalf when self-advocacy is not possible.
2. **Information and Referral (I&R):** This service is available to anyone, regardless of disability or place of residence, and is provided in-person, by phone, or mail. Whenever possible, you will be provided with a variety of resource options. You can then choose which ones best meet your needs. This information is important because a person with a disability needs information about options, resources, and the issues that affect his/her ability to live independently. Referral assistance is also essential as achieving independence may require the involvement of one or more community agencies or organizations.

I&R services are also provided to other service organizations and the community. This assistance is instrumental in increasing public awareness of disability issues and knowledge of the services and resources

available to people with disabilities from the center and the community.

3. Independent Living Skills Instruction: This service teaches you the necessary skills to live independently with a disability. Some areas covered by the training include grooming and personal care, managing finances, communication skills, household management, and social and recreational activities.
4. Peer support: A basic belief in Independent Living is that people with disabilities, because of their disability-related experiences, are uniquely qualified to assist their own peers. The center works to connect people with each other so that they can learn from each other. This is accomplished through peer support groups, social and recreational activities, and one-on-one matching.
5. Transition: This service has two goals. One helps individuals move from medical care facilities or institutional care to community-based living. The second helps school age consumers transition from their academic career in elementary, middle and secondary school environments to higher education, the workplace, or adult community-based living.
6. Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Training: This service can provide you with the skills you need to travel independently. The skills include self-protective techniques, room orientation, mapping skills, white cane travel, and learning

to use public transportation. White cane training is primarily a third-party fee service program.

7. Independent Living Aids and Assistive Technology: the center has special devices and equipment that can't be used by people with disabilities to make them more independent. Some of these aids can be purchased by you at the center's cost. Other equipment is available for community and the consumer demonstration, evaluation, training and/or loan. The Equipment is loaned on a temporary basis to consumers who have identified a need for it. If you like the equipment, and it is helpful to you, Center staff will work with you so that you can get your own equipment.

Community Services

The center provides services to the community to increase its ability to meet the needs of people with significant disabilities. These services also increase and improve the quality of community options so that people with significant disabilities can achieve independent living goals. The following is a description of the community services provided by the Center.

1. Systems Advocacy: Systems advocacy separates CILS from other programs for people with disabilities. We work at the local, state or national level to make sure that policies and laws promoting equal access to society for people with disabilities are developed, revised or implemented, and that barriers to independent living are removed. Systems advocacy activities can be as simple as

increasing awareness of a problem, or as complicated as legislative initiatives. The Center starts by trying to educate and assist before moving to aggressive measures. We also view active consumer involvement as the key to making things better.

2. **Public Information and Education:** We provide information and conduct activities to increase community awareness and knowledge of disability related issues.
3. **Technical Assistance:** the center provides technical assistance to individuals, organizations and agencies that help make the community services, programs, activities, resources and facilities accessible to people with disabilities. This includes provision of training services to service providers, community groups, governmental agencies, business groups, etc.
4. **Collaboration:** The Center works in partnership with a number of other agencies and organizations to improve community options for people with disabilities. Staff members also serve on local, state and national policymaking boards and committees to accomplish the same goal.
5. **Outreach:** This includes efforts by staff to locate and serve individuals who are members of groups who are underserved or underserved by existing programs and agencies.

Confidentiality

All personal and program information gathered by the Center is confidential. The provision of the requested information to the center is voluntary. If information essential to the provision of service is not provided, it may be impossible for the center to determine whether you are eligible for services or provide you with adequate and appropriate services. The center may also obtain personal information about you from other service providers and cooperating agencies. This information is used to provide you with IL Services or to administer the IL Program under which services are provided. This information will not be divulged, except as stated below.

The Center collects and uses personal information for the following purposes:

1. To provide you with appropriate and adequate IL Services.
2. To assist in the administration of the IL Program under which services are provided.
3. To demonstrate that the center is complying with the regulations in 34 CFR arch 364, 365 and 366 which govern the implementation of Title VII, Chapter 1 of The Rehabilitation Act, as amended
4. To provide other granting agencies with demographic information about the type of people who are served by the center to assist in the application for additional funding.

The center requires informed written consent from you, or your legally authorized representative, before releasing the personal or program information in the following situations:

1. The centers shall release all information in your consumer record to you, or your legally authorized representative, in a timely manner, unless we feel that medical, psychological, or other information may be harmful to you. If this is the case, this information must be provided through a qualified medical or psychological professional, or your legally authorized representative. If we have obtained personal information about you from another agency or organization, we can only release it under the conditions established by the other agency or organization.
2. The center may release personal information about you to another agency or organization for program purposes only to the extent that the information may be released to you and only to the extent that the other agency or organization to demonstrate that the requested information is necessary for the proper administration of its program. However, the center may release medical or psychological information if the other agency or organization assures the center that the information is to be used for the purpose of which it is provided.

The center may release personal information about you to an organization, agency, or person engaged in audit, evaluation,

or research activities. For purposes directly connected with the administration of an IL Program or for purposes that would significantly improve the quality of life for people with disabilities. This information could include your case file, including your name, address, photograph, and records of evaluations found in your case file. The center can only release this personal information if the organization, agency, or person ensures that:

1. The information will be used only for the purposes for which it is provided.
2. The information will be released only to people officially connected with audit, evaluation, or research.
3. The information will not be released to you.
4. The information will be managed in a manner to safeguard confidentiality.
5. The final product will not reveal any personally identifying information, without informed written consent from you, or your legally authorized representative.

The center shall also release your personal information in the following cases:

1. If required by federal law or regulation.
2. In response to investigations in connection with law enforcement, fraud, or abuse, unless expressly prohibited by federal or state law or regulation, and in response to judicial order.

3. To protect you or others if you pose a threat to your own safety or to the safety of others.

Consumer Appeal Procedure

If you disagree with the center services that you are offered, the method of service delivery or actions of treatment home center personnel, the following steps can be initiated by you or your legally authorized representative. Actions taken under this procedure should follow the order listed here. Exceptions to this order are justified when allegations of discrimination, breach of confidentiality, or other serious breaches of acceptable standards of conduct occur. In these situations, you should initiate action after the second step.

Step 1: Discuss your concerns with your assigned Independent Living Coordinator. This action can be taken at any time. It can be communicated verbally or in writing. You are encouraged to make your concern known as soon as possible to quickly resolve differences. At this point you will be reminded of the assistance available to you through the Client Assistant Program (CAP).

Step 2: If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the action taken above, you can notify the Executive Director, either verbally or in writing, and request a director's review. You shall provide the director with the facts and reasons for the request at the time of the notification. Upon receipt of the above, the director shall arrange a meeting with you and your representative, if applicable, within ten (10) working days or

at your convenience. The purpose of the meeting will be to obtain additional information from all parties concerned and attempt to resolve the problem. The findings, results of the meeting, decisions or agreements made, and the next steps in the appeal process will be summarized by the director in writing (Director's Review Summary). A copy will be provided to you, to the staff member, and will be placed in your consumer file within five (5) working days of the meeting.

Step 3: If you do not agree with the decisions made in the director's review, you can request a review by the center's Board of Directors (Request for a Board Review). The request for board review shall include the facts and reasons for the request and will be submitted, in writing, within fifteen (15) working days of receipt of the director's review summary, to the Executive Director and to the President of the Board of Directors. Upon the receipt of the above, the Executive Director shall submit the Director's Review Summary, to the President of the Board of Directors within three (3) working days. The Center Board of Directors, you, your legally authorized representative, applicable, and the Executive Director will meet during the next regularly scheduled board meeting following the transmittal of the Director's Review Summary, to review the appeal and attempt to resolve the problem. The findings and final decision of the center Board of Directors shall be submitted in writing to you, the Executive Director, and placed in your center consumer file within fifteen (15) days of the board meeting.

Indiana Disability Rights Client Assistance Program (CAP)

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is designed to assist individuals in securing the services, benefits, rights or remedies available from a program or project under the Rehabilitation Act. This includes Independent Living Programs, or projects, as well as services available from the office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

CAP may assist you by:

1. Providing you with information and referral or advice.
2. Providing mediation with the staff of the program/project on your behalf.
3. Helping you prepare for or representing you in appeals.
4. Providing you with legal consultation and, if necessary, legal representation in court.

If you are seeking or are receiving services from an independent living program or project, or from the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, or another program or project under the Rehabilitation Act and have questions or complaints about those services, you may request CAP assistance by calling:

Toll Free: 1-800-622-4845
Indianapolis Area: 1-317-232-1150
(both numbers are Voice and TTY Equipped)

Or by Writing:
Client Assistance Program
4701 North Keystone Avenue, Suite 222
Indianapolis IN, 46205

CAP is administered by Indiana Disability Rights. It is independent of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Independent Living Centers, and all other direct service programs.

Indiana Disability Rights is an equal opportunity employer and provides services to all people who are disabled, with the guidelines set forth by federal legislation.