

Benefits of Membership

Care about Independent Living.

Independent Living means controlling and directing your own life, taking risks, and being allowed to succeed and fail on your own terms. The Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council exists to advance the equality with which people with disabilities enjoy, participate in and contribute to the lives of their communities, families and friends. Towards that end, by joining our Council, you can make a difference!

Advise on legislative action:

The VT SILC assists in educating legislators about the technical aspects of bills that relate to the disability community.

Work against barriers for people with disabilities:

If you join the Independent Living movement in Vermont you can be a part of efforts designed to ease burdens for people with disabilities. For instance, transition services can help people achieve meaningful employment, participate in their communities, and pay taxes, relieving some of the burden on the public benefits system. The SILC advises and educates the general public and legislators on the value of transition services (and many other service programs like it) by identifying cost saving aspects of these programs and pointing out the effects in the lives of PWD's if these programs are not sufficiently funded.

Pursue your passion:

As a Council member you will have the opportunity to introduce issues regarding the Independent Living community in Vermont that you feel need to be addressed. There are many ongoing efforts; Council members are encouraged to offer input regarding their area of expertise, whether that be one's own disability or another area of experience.



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Current Efforts

Inclusion for everyone

Include! was created by the SILC, and it is a curriculum that helps students and educators explore disability rights and the social history of disability experience through the voices and experiences of people who lived it. The curriculum was developed with the help of teachers, family members, and individuals with disabilities. The purpose of the program is to bring disability pride to students with and without disabilities. **Include!** materials are available free as an online textbook to interested schools. Schools and educators can use **Include!** as a separate curriculum, but many choose specific lesson plans and materials that they incorporate into their anti-bias and diversity activities.

Peer-to-Peer Reviews of Accessible Places

Accessible Adventures is an online peer-to-peer review system of Accessible places to go in Vermont. Categories that are reviewed and able to be reviewed include Dining and Entertainment, Shopping, Recreation, Houses of Worship, Public Places and Others. Please visit AccessibleAdventuresVT.org to see accessible places to go or to submit a review. The SILC is actively looking for volunteers to submit user reviews to build this public database.

We're Creating a Unified Voice for People with Disabilities:

The SILC is in the process of uniting with its natural partners to form a coalition that will attempt to effectively speak to disability rights and the benefits of independent living. Indeed this coalition will address – with unified voice – issues critical to the well-being and rightful concerns of persons with disabilities and,

by extension, all of society. Whether it be moving forward with implementation of the ADA/Olmstead Decision or countering the stigma unjustly associated with disability, the coalition will strive for justice for all.



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Member's role and responsibilities

Educational background:

Become thoroughly informed about

- a. the Independent Living Movement – its history and implications
- b. the parallel disability rights movement.

Technical knowledge:

- a. familiarize oneself with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (under which SILC's are established); learn the statutory functions of SILC's, as well as their relationship to state government
- b. become familiar with the VT SILC bylaws and its general operating structure, including committee structure
- c. read and understand the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) which forms the basis for oversight of IL activities in the State

Participation:

- a. be prepared to participate in 4 SILC Quarterly meetings – full day meetings, generally held mid-state
- b. join and participate in at least one SILC committee: Advocacy, Education, Executive, Finance, Membership, Nominating
- c. accept/volunteer for Committee assignments and be prepared to fulfill Committee obligations
- d. accept/volunteer for roles in SILC special projects, fulfilling obligations as expected
- e. assist in recruitment of new SILC members, as warranted

General:

- a. be punctual for all meetings, including teleconferences
- b. submit assigned material as per obligation
- c. submit all reimbursement claims in a timely manner
- d. above all, support the overriding belief that every person has the right to live, work, plan and contribute to community life as he/she desires.



Note: Members are reimbursed for mileage expenses, as well as necessary/reasonable accommodations, such as attendant care providers; a per diem allowance is also available for time spent at meetings and authorized special events.

SILC History and Structure

What is the SILC?

The Vermont Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is a not-for-profit, non-governmental, consumer controlled organization. The council is composed of 21 appointees from around the state – a majority of whom have disabilities – representing diverse cultures and needs in the state. The SILC is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the 3-year Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The Council is jointly responsible for the SPIL with its state plan partners – The Vermont State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (Voc Rehab) and the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI).

Legal Basis:

Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC's), established under Title VII of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, are gubernatorially appointed councils which coordinate the functions related to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the SPIL. The VT SILC provides support and technical assistance to the Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL) – a statewide, a community-based organization directed by and for people with disabilities.

Council meetings are held quarterly and are open to the public. For more information, call us at 802-233-4908, or email us at vtsilcpeter@gmail.com.



History:

In addition to diligently fulfilling its statutory responsibilities, the VT SILC has engaged in national networking – for example, by actively participating in national conferences and forums.

Indeed the VT SILC has successfully proposed amendments at the annual SILC Congress on such relevant topics



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as adequate health care for persons with disabilities and eliminating barriers to employment. The VT SILC has also been a national leader among SILC's in disability education of youths by its creation of the PRIDE curriculum – a recognized paradigm. Recently, the VT SILC has lent its expertise to strengthening disabled parking laws Statewide and to advising upon methods to heighten work incentives within State programs.

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Advantages of Programs/Services Which Support Independent Living

1. Sufficient funding of programs/services which support IL prevents **GREATER** long-term expenditures – for example, by reducing incidence of **MUCH** more costly institutionalization.
2. By encouraging self-sufficiency, economic, as well as social, productivity is increased. Such productivity serves as an economic stimulus as more people are employed, pay more in taxes and enhance their portion of consumer spending.
3. Self-sufficiency and the resulting self-dignity within a stable community-based setting, lessens incidents of delinquent behavior – resulting in less expenditures within the Corrections System and law enforcement, generally.
4. By receiving appropriate and timely in-home care, **MORE** costly services – such as emergency room visits, housing crisis interventions, etc., would be avoided!
5. In summary, IL programs/services, when used appropriately, are a **COST-EFFECTIVE** means of supporting social and economic goals.



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