

Executive Summary

Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council

Needs Assessment

A Needs Assessment was conducted to identify priority needs, service gaps, barriers to independent living, and opportunities to strengthen Center for Independent Living (CIL) services across Ohio. A mixed-methods approach was used that included surveys of CIL consumers and Ohioans with disabilities, interviews and a focus group with CIL consumers, and a review of internal CIL service data and state-level disability data. Together, these sources were analyzed to identify the greatest needs of people living with disabilities in Ohio.

232

Total Survey Respondents

CIL Consumers also participated in interviews and focus groups to provide deeper context.

Needs Identified

Information and Referral

- Demand for disability-related information appears to be high.
- Knowledge of:
 - Types of public benefits for people living with disabilities, and how to navigate the system.
 - Disability rights related to work, living, and for children in schools (and their parents).
 - Key questions consumers should ask professionals when calling about students' IEPs or public benefits.
 - Who (which staff member) to contact for assistance at referred locations.
 - Who to call for transportation, and of which transportation services people are qualified (e.g., special transportation services for wheelchairs, elderly).
- More referrals distributed/more options on the referral list for the following supports:
 - Caregivers.
 - Housekeeping services.
 - Support groups.
 - Affordable housing.
 - Transportation.
 - Mental health services.
 - Employment support.
 - Emergency assistance.



- Referrals that include accurate and updated contact information and updated services that are provided by that referral (and excluding services that are no longer offered from the list).
- Referrals that connect consumers to organizations that can effectively meet their needs (e.g., in local areas, that consumers are qualified to access/receive).
- Faster response times by CIL staff, and easier access to the CILs and their online resources.

Skills Training

- Consumers and non-CIL consumers identified trainings they feel they need offered by CILs, which include:



Independent living and household management skills, such as cooking, food and kitchen safety, cleaning, household management, parenting, budgeting, and financial management.



Technology and assistive/adaptive tools, including computers, cell phones, AI tools, virtual assistants, common device accessibility features, bump dots, braille, sign language, and other adaptive strategies.



Self-advocacy, safety, and disability rights, including self-advocacy, disability rights, emergency preparedness, water safety, transportation safety, and driving.



Social, relationship, and community navigation skills, such as social skills, dating, relationship building, internet use, library and research skills, and navigating travel resources within the U.S. and internationally.



Systems navigation, including housing applications, Medicaid waivers, public benefits, and other resources that support independent living.

- Opportunities for community-based learning in accessible and social community settings.

Peer Support

- One-on-one peer support from people living with a disability (i.e., peer support by people with shared experiences).
- Disability-led peer support groups and mentoring opportunities.
- Programs that help consumers connect with others who share similar experiences, challenges, and goals.

Advocacy

- Follow-up support for people navigating Medicaid, Social Security, accessible housing, and disability rights issues; the process is difficult to follow once it begins and consumers are unclear about their rights.
- Community awareness of disability-related issues and disability-led initiatives among non-disability focused organizations.
- Peer-led advocacy opportunities that help build confidence and leadership skills.

Transition to the Community and Diversion

- Opportunities for social connection through community events, workshops, and social gatherings.
- Activities in accessible community locations.
- Opportunities for volunteering in the community and skill-building activities.
- Opportunities for individuals who use augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices to connect with peers.

Youth Transition

- Independent living experiences and skill-building opportunities for youth during weekends or school breaks.
- Support for students and families navigating IEPs, 504 plans, and other school-based services.
- Awareness and support for accommodations and assistive resources, including service dogs in educational settings.
- Connection of children and youth with disabilities to services, supports, and peer networks at earlier ages.





Call to Action

The Ohio Statewide Independent Living Council (OSILC) and Independent Living Network plans to engage Ohio communities to help develop the State Plan for Independent Living to address the needs identified in the OSILC Needs Assessment.

