

## Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services Centers for Independent Living (CILs) Survey: Insight into the CIL Experience

Centers for Independent Living (CILs) are private nonprofit organizations controlled and administered by people with disabilities.

- CILs provide services and advocacy to promote the leadership, independence, and productivity of people with disabilities.
- CILs work with individuals as well as local communities, to remove barriers to independence and ensure equality of persons with disabilities.

The Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) has oversight and fiscal responsibility for state funding provided to the 16 Virginia CILs and 4 satellite CILs. This oversight is provided through the DARS Independent Living (IL) Office.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2014 (October to April), a DARS web survey was available to Virginia CIL consumers with short or long term goals. The survey was designed to learn about the Virginia CIL experience as perceived by consumers. Insights gained from survey responses show CILs have addressed issues impacting consumers' lives and contributed to changes in their lives and communities.

### Consumers Connected with CILs for Numerous Reasons

Insights gained from the survey were based on 597 consumers who indicated they were receiving or had received CIL services. The most frequently mentioned reasons for these consumers visiting a CIL were related to:

- housing or home modifications,
- personal care or assistance in their home, and
- Medicaid waivers or facilitation.

### Eighty-four Percent Reported What Changed Most in Their Lives

When consumers were asked what had changed most in their lives as a result of working with the CIL, top mentioned changes were related to:

- feelings or attitudes about themselves,
- their independence, and
- their ability to be more social or involved in recreation.

### Fifty-nine Percent Decided on Services on their Own or With Staff Assistance

An important aspect of CIL service is consumer control in decision making and service delivery. Consumers shared who decided on services they received.

- Fifty-nine percent decided on their own or with assistance of CIL staff.
- Thirty-four percent decided with family/friends or with assistance of CIL staff and family/friends.
- The remaining consumers indicated CIL staff or other combinations of assistance.

### Forty-nine Percent Reported What Changed Most in Their Communities

In the recent survey, consumers reported what had changed most in their communities as a result of having a CIL in the area. While consumers reported mostly things that impacted them or their families, other top mentioned changes were related to:

- accessibility,
- CIL as an asset in the community, and
- community awareness.

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### A Closer Look into the CIL Experience

Further insight into the CIL experience was gained through consumers sharing how they learned about the CIL, the skills they learned, and the assistance received from CILs and CIL staff. Friends, family, and DARS were the top three ways consumers learned about the CIL. Once connected with the CIL, consumers developed skills related mostly to advocacy, independence or independent living, and transportation.

#### Assistance Received from CILs

Consumers selected ways they were assisted by CILs from a pre-identified list of areas of assistance. Top mentioned responses showed CILs assisted consumers in:

- becoming more independent in at least one area of life,
- improving ability to advocate or speak up, and
- learning new skills and making better decisions.

Some consumers provided additional or more specific ways they were assisted by CILs. The most frequently mentioned areas were related to:

- housing or home modifications
- personal care or assistance in their home, and
- Medicaid waivers or facilitation.

#### Assistance Received from CIL Staff

Consumers also reported ways they were assisted by CIL staff from a pre-identified list. Based on top mentioned responses, staff assisted consumers in providing:

- necessary information or tools to make decisions,
- steps that could be taken, and
- encouragement to take the lead.

Additional or more specific means of staff assistance were provided by some consumers. The most frequently mentioned areas were related to staff:

- providing lists, information, or resources;
- assisting with housing or home modifications; and
- assisting with personal care or assistance in their home.

Twenty-five percent of consumers provided additional comments at the end of the survey. Their comments continued to describe primarily CIL appreciation and assistance.

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*The survey was designed to gain insights into the Virginia CIL experience as perceived by consumers; it was not designed to make generalizations about the Virginia CIL population. For more information, visit <http://www.vadars.org/cbs/cils.htm>.*

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