



Guiding Principles for Embedding Employment into Center for Independent Living (CIL) Core Services

A Technical Resource for CILs

Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center-2021-CIL-1

September 2021

Overview

The Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the 2016 final rule for Independent Living (IL) collectively provide clarification of definitions and processes to reflect the independent living philosophy that is integral to our workforce investment system with respect to fully aligning with our nation's disability civil rights framework. WIOA included numerous statutory changes that affect IL programs, including the addition of new core services, shifts in the process of developing and adopting state plans and changes in the functions of the State Independent Living Council (SILC).

The final rule for IL programs was developed in close coordination with the independent living network and addressed the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA. Specifically, the rule provides guidance on the implementation of WIOA's addition of new "core services," which specify that all CILs must:

- facilitate the transition of individuals with significant disabilities from nursing homes and other institutions to home and community-based settings (this includes providing consumer-controlled supports and services and the advocacy needed to move from an institutional setting to community-based setting);
- provide assistance, services, and supports to individuals with significant disabilities who self-identify as being at risk of entering institutions so that the individuals may remain in the community; and
- facilitate the transition of youth with significant disabilities who are no longer in school and no longer receiving services under section 614(d) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Transition services for youth prior to post-secondary life are important to prepare youth for a successful transition into adult life. Some youth transition activities not covered under the fifth



core service may be included within the other four core services, Sec. 7 (17)(A-D) of the Act, 29 U.S.C. 705(17)(A-D), as well as within the Independent Living Services in Sec. 7(18), 29 U.S.C. 705(18). Additionally, supporting the employment aspirations and career development goals of individuals with disabilities throughout the lifespan is something that can and should be embedded into each of the five CIL core services. The following resource identifies demonstrated strategies for CILs to embed a focus around successful employment of people with disabilities into each of the five core services. Such strategies have been tried previously by various CILs across the country and align with the overall mission of CILs to assist people with disabilities through education, information referral, peer supports, advocacy, and successful transitions to live, work, fully participate, and thrive in the broader community. The following strategies can easily and practically be infused into a CIL's pre-existing programming to assure that career planning, competitive integrated employment, and ongoing professional development and advancement are topics that individuals with disabilities prioritize as they continue down their path of independent living and optimal self-sufficiency.

Incorporating Employment into Each of the Five CIL Core Services

Embedding Employment into CIL Advocacy Services

CILs support and assist consumers in learning skills for self-advocacy. The following strategies can enhance efforts to encourage individuals with disabilities in the pursuit of career pathways and employment goals:

- Facilitate an introspective process that encourages individuals to identify key skills and strengths they possess (these could include interpersonal skill strengths, specific work-related skills, previous employment successes and willingness to learn), and then brainstorm effective ways to convey those strengths to prospective or current employers.
- Assist individuals in developing principles of self-worth, i.e., knowing and being able to articulate their individual worth and value as a contributing member to their workplace, their communities, and the larger society.
- Support individuals to set a professional goal that highlights their skills and strengths and the type of work which interests them and assist in establishing realistic objectives and milestones for accomplishing their goal(s) based on an understanding of the potential that they offer to the workforce and employers.
- Assist individuals in the development of skills to effectively communicate with co-workers, supervisors, and recruiters, whether it be in public speaking, negotiations, team meetings, or position advocacy.



- Teach self-advocacy methods to help individuals with disabilities communicate concerns to local and state decision-makers when facing barriers to employment due to policies within the state and federal service systems (such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), American Job Centers (AJC), state Medicaid agencies), to overcome specific challenges related to their own personal employment as well as push for needed changes in these systems.
- CILs should also be prepared to provide feedback directly to state decision-makers about the impact of state policies and program requirements on employment outcomes. For example, if individuals are limiting employment or suppressing their income due to state Medicaid restrictions around earnings, a CIL's front-line experience and insights about the unintended consequences of the current policy barrier would provide critical information for state decision-makers.

Embedding Employment into CIL Information/Referral Services



CIL staff provide information on a variety of subjects and resources to foster individual progress in attaining maximum independence and provide referrals to community services when needed. The following are examples of ways that CILs can and have embedded employment into their Information and Referral services:

- Provide information on state's Medicaid Buy-In for Workers with Disabilities program to enable individuals to make informed decisions about work and so that individuals with disabilities can feel comfortable pursuing maximum employment knowing they have an option for maintaining stable health care coverage.
- Provide information/referral to Ticket to Work, Work Incentives Planning and Assistance, and community-based transportation resources.
- Provide resources to job training supports including but not limited to any online tools and applications.
- Provide referrals to VR and/or Developmental Disability Services, AJCs, state Department of Mental Health, local employment agencies, etc.

Embedding Employment in Independent Living Skills Training

CILs help in assessing and developing the skills individuals need to live independently. Skill areas may include but are not limited to effective communication, financial management, household management, accessing community services, problem identification and solving, and using adaptive/non-adaptive equipment. Embedded within the philosophy of independent living is preparing people with disabilities to be able to rely on themselves to handle life's challenges and



whatever is thrown at them. Employment is an area that clearly fosters greater independence, personal accountability, and self-reliance.

The following are examples of how CILs can and have embedded employment into IL Skills Training activities:

- Contract with VR, Developmental Disabilities Administrations (DDA), AJCs, or employers directly to provide specific skills development associated with employment goals.
- Identify what types of formal and information training is needed to assist in achieving individualized employment goals.
 - Self-esteem/confidence building to prepare for employment
 - Access to benefits counseling
 - Career options counseling
 - Job search skills (resumes, interviews)
 - Workplace skill-building (communicating effectively, workplace etiquette, professional relationships, etc.)
 - Job performance support
 - Troubleshooting workplace challenges (including appropriateness of when/how to handle disability disclosure, accommodations, and advocacy)
 - Identify what types of adaptive equipment may be needed to achieve individualized employment goals, and how to secure such equipment (e.g., Medicaid, Medicare, private support, other resources)
- Provide skills training to navigate access to reasonable accommodations. Learning more about employment rights under the American with Disabilities Act.
- Assist with exploring available transportation options.
- Assist with learning how benefits (e.g., Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI)) may be affected if an individual goes to work and how to circumvent potential challenges.



Embedding Employment in Peer Support

One-to-one and/or group Peer Support is available from trained volunteers and staff who have personally experienced a disability and are willing to share their life experiences. Information, assistance, and support may be provided to assist a consumer in dealing with issues related to their disability. Peer support around work experience is critical. Individuals benefit greatly from real examples of peer success in employment, ideally within the workforce area or sector for which they are training and are interested in pursuing a career.



The following are potential examples of ways CILs can and have embedded the topics of employment and economic advancement into their Peer Support services:

- Model through peer supports some of the elements noted under advocacy core services, like examples of determining self-worth, communicating, and advocating for one's interests to an employer.
- Share trouble-shooting strategies and informational resources on navigating various publicly-financed systems to acquire job training and other employment supports to help individuals maximize their options and avoid unnecessary administrative delays or challenges.
- Mentor individuals on how to start the job exploration process (e.g., developing a resume; searching for jobs, apprenticeships, or internships in their chosen field; networking with professionals in their areas of interest; requesting informational interviews; practicing video interviews) to encourage individuals to go after their own employment goals with or without the assistance of publicly-financed systems (e.g., education, Medicaid HCBS, vocational rehabilitation, workforce investment).
- Include peers with experiences of successfully transitioning from institutional or nursing home living or spending time in congregate day facilities to competitive, integrated employment, where possible. Stories and examples should be shared by staff, as well as direct connections made to forge formal or informal mentoring relationships between and among peers.
- Develop and host employment-focused peer groups to foster ongoing opportunities for meaningful engagement, information sharing, and peer supports during the employment process.



- Connect students with disabilities with and share the stories of youth and young adults who have successfully acquired work experience during their transition years to educate and encourage these students to pursue employment.
- Capture both written and virtual materials highlighting peer-employment success stories across the employment lifespan (pre-employment, career advancement, employment transitions, financial capability and asset development, and intentional retirement) to develop a treasure chest of resources to support and encourage individuals in all aspects of their individual career pathway.

Embedding Employment into Transition

CILs offer services to facilitate and support the successful transition of individuals with significant disabilities from nursing homes and other institutions to home and community-based residences, with the requisite supports and services; provide assistance to individuals with significant disabilities who are at risk of entering institutions, so that the individuals may remain in the community; and facilitate the transition of certain youth with disabilities. These bullets are ways to think about integrating employment into Transition:

Transitions from Institutional Facilities: Employment-Specific Checklist

When developing transition plans for those being discharged from facilities, ensure that goals for employment and daytime activities are included from the beginning and begin the conversation on setting employment goals early in the planning

- When identifying housing options for individuals transitioning, be sure to factor in employment and daytime activities from the beginning of the process. This may include identifying whether there is public transportation or transportation from natural supports available for the individual to get to work or daytime vocational activities. The aim is to ensure the individual is not isolated or limited in pursuing employment or daytime community integration activities based on where they will be living.
- Identify services and supports needed to assist individuals in achieving successful employment.
 - For those needing Personal Assistance Services, are adjustments needed to accommodate preparations for work?
 - Are there employment supports available?
 - Are there vocational services available?
- Identify what types of adaptive equipment may be needed to assist in achieving individualized employment goals.
 - What are the ways in which those items are available? Through Medicaid, Medicare, prospective employers, or other resources?
- Provide resources to job training supports. Are there online tools or applications available?
- Provide state health insurance information, including for Medicaid, as it is critical to have stabilized health to achieve successful employment.
- Provide information and support to prepare for what to do if and when an individual's situation changes: life events, change in living status, change in health status, change in job.



Diversion Strategies for Individuals At-Risk of Entering Institutions Checklist

- Identify services and supports needed to assist individuals in achieving successful employment.
 - For those receiving Personal Assistance Services, are adjustments needed to accommodate preparations for work?
 - Are there employment supports available?
 - Are there vocational services available?
- Identify what types of adaptive equipment may be needed to assist in achieving individualized employment goals.
 - What are the ways in which those items are available? Through Medicaid, Medicare, other resources?
- Provide resources to job training supports. Are there online tools available?
- Provide state health insurance information, including Medicaid. It is critical to have stabilized health to achieve successful employment.
- Provide information and support to prepare for what to do if and when an individual's situation changes: life events, change in living status, change in health status, change in job.

Youth-in-Transition Strategies: Employment-Specific Checklist

- When developing transition plans ensure that goals for employment and daytime activities are included from the beginning, and initiate conversation on setting employment goals early in the planning.
- Identify services and supports needed to assist individuals in achieving successful employment.
 - For those receiving Personal Assistance Services, are adjustments needed to accommodate preparations for work?
 - Are there employment supports available?
 - Are there vocational services available?
- Identify what types of adaptive equipment may be needed to assist in achieving individualized employment goals.
 - What are the ways in which those items are available? Medicaid, Medicare, other resources?
- Provide resources to job training supports. Are there online tools available?
- Provide state health insurance information, including Medicaid. It is critical to have stabilized health to achieve successful employment.
 - For transitioning youth, access to health insurance, including Medicaid, may be more complex as they transition to adult status. Assist individuals with becoming better versed in state health insurance policies.
- Provide information and support to prepare for what to do if and when an individual's situation changes: life events, change in living status, change in health status, change in job.
- Contract with Vocational Rehabilitation or local education authority to offer pre-Employment Training Services and focus on creating integrated work-based learning experiences (internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, mentoring, and employment positions).



Interested in Learning More?

Additional strategies for amplifying your CIL's efforts to improve the employment and socioeconomic outcomes of persons with disabilities can be further explored via other technical resources developed by the Disability Employment Technical Assistance Center (DETAC). These resources are available on DETAC's [publications page](#).

