



Independent Living Philosophy

The philosophy of the Independent Living Movement; is based on the principles of self-determination, self-help and consumer control; empowers individuals to live an inclusive, self-actualized life-style; and advocates for the community accessibility that supports that lifestyle.

Independent Living has to do with self-determination - having the right and the opportunity to pursue a course of action regardless of what it may be. CILs are an outgrowth of the international civil rights movement that works against discrimination of, and for more personal and political power for, people with disabilities. The movement consists of people of all ages with diverse disabilities. Origins of the movement date back to the 1960's.

Independent Living is having opportunities to make decisions that affect one's life, pursuing activities of one's own choosing, and should not be solely defined in terms of living on one's own, being employed, or having an active social life. These are important aspects of Independent Living but not the only ones.

The Movement consists of a network of CILs and local organizations which work for equal opportunities for people with disabilities and provide such services as advocacy, counseling, peer support, personal assistance and housing referral, and transition assistance from school to adult life or from institutions to the community.

Aspects of IL Philosophy Include:

Anti-discrimination

The Independent Living Movement supports anti-discrimination legislation and services which guarantee equal opportunities for all people.

Self-Determination

The Independent Living Movement demands self-determination. Disability is not a medical problem, but a problem of unequal power and preconceived attitudes and societal barriers. Pride, political power and far-reaching systemic changes can alter the scales' balance.

De-institutionalization

The Independent Living Movement has amply demonstrated that nobody, regardless of type and extent of disability, needs to live in a restricted environment, if provided with the appropriate services in the community.

Consumer Control

The Independent Living Movement seeks to ensure that people with disabilities are afforded the same range of options and degree of control to live independently as their non-disabled peers are. Choice is the key to Independent Living.

Stakeholder involvement in planning of services is essential. The Independent Living Movement operates on the belief that organizations can work more effectively towards the goal of full participation and equality of all people with disabilities when they themselves are in control.

Peer Support

The Independent Living Movement recognizes that political emancipation for people with disabilities must go hand in hand with liberating themselves from internalized oppression, self-contempt, and low self-confidence. For this purpose, the Movement has developed its own pedagogy: peer counseling. Peer counseling is designed to share the fruits of one's experience. In peer counseling courses and support sessions, individuals with disabilities learn from each other the practical and social skills needed to be self-directing in the community. Peer counseling provides role models, helps to increase self-reliance and encourages individuals to take charge of their lives.

For more information about IL services, please contact the NJ Statewide Independent Living Council or your local Center for Independent Living via the SILC website www.njsilc.org