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OIL Newsletter



A monthly publication of THE OKLAHOMANS for INDEPENDENT LIVING

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SENATE INTRODUCES S. 1356 TO REAUTHORIZE THE REHAB ACT!

After decades of grassroots advocacy and months of negotiations, a bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers announced that they have reached a deal to improve the nation's workforce development system through new legislation, the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*.

The *Rehabilitation Act* is contained in this bill.

This bill has a number of provisions that strengthen America's Centers for Independent Living and Statewide Independent Living Councils.

The bill includes improvements such as:

- Independent Living Programs will move to the Administration on Community Living (ACL) within Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)
- Addition of fifth core service
- Improvements to SILC activities, including resource development
- Changes SPIL sign-off to include CIL Directors
- States can choose their 'designated state entity' (formerly known as the DSU)

Essentially, all of the improvements to the IL program that were included in *S. 1356* are included in the new bill.

This is a big win to the IL Movement! Independent Living Center staff and their advocacy, has paid off. Stay tuned, OIL will be keeping you informed on this bill as it progresses.

What is the Rehabilitation Act?

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is a piece of legislation currently contained within a larger bill called the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), and was

the first major legislative effort to secure an equal playing field for individuals with disabilities, and prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Rehabilitation Act is the federal legislation that authorizes the formula grant programs of vocational rehabilitation, supported employment, client assistance, and Independent Living.

What is Independent Living?

Independent Living (IL) is the most widely accepted perspective on disability rights in America. The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) is a national organization responsible for advocating for this philosophy, which emphasizes that people with disabilities are the best experts on their own needs, that they have crucial and valuable perspective to contribute to society, and deserve equal opportunity to decide how to live, work, and take part in their communities.

Independent Living is a nonpartisan priority in both Democratic and Republican Administrations. Congress established the Independent Living Program within the Department of Education, and

continues to provide funding for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), which are congressionally mandated organizations that plan or deliver services and support people with disabilities to live independently. CILs are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential, private, nonprofit agencies that are designed and operated within local communities by individuals with disabilities. There are over 400 federally funded CILs, and 56 SILCs representing every state and congressional district; elected members of Congress must know about their local Centers if they plan on actively supporting their constituents with disabilities.

Why Reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act?

Federal support for CILs and SILCs is primarily established in the Rehabilitation Act, which has not been reauthorized in nearly 15 years, even though Congress requires itself to reauthorize the legislation every 5 years. The most important way right now to help Americans with disabilities live and work more independently is to reauthorize the Rehabilitation Act, including the establishment of an Independent Living Administration (ILA). The ILA would properly support the Independent Living Program that serves CILs and SILCs allowing the program to function more effectively. The ILA Director would be directly responsible to the Administrator for the Administration for Community Living of the Department of Health and Human Services. Reauthorizing

the Rehabilitation Act will also make a number of changes that will help CILs and SILCs perform by reducing the bureaucracy that currently stifles their progress, and making more efficient use of taxpayer dollars.

The disability community strongly supports reauthorizing the Rehabilitation Act, and cannot wait another decade for Congress to reauthorize its commitment to Americans with disabilities.

Why an Independent Living Administration (ILA)?

Since the late 1970s, the first 10 federally funded CILs have outgrown their current placement under the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and today's 417 CILs require more specialization if Congress wants to make good on its commitment to Independent Living, home and community-based services, and freedom for Americans with disabilities. The Independent Living Program's placement within RSA is inappropriate considering its vocational mission. The ILA would operate under the Independent Living Philosophy and would draw upon the decades of expertise developed in IL nationally, providing effective leadership of the program, and facilitating its potential to increase services to consumers and value to taxpayers. It is important to know that:

» Elevating the Independent Living Program will not cost taxpayer money, and will not contribute to the deficit - the ILA is supported by both Republicans and Democrats

» CILs save the state and federal governments over a half billion dollars each year
» An ILA will eliminate the harmful bureaucracy stifling the Independent Living Program under RSA within the Department of Education, and streamlines how people with disabilities can impact policies that affect them
» An ILA would not require any increase in administrative costs because the existing funding designated for the IL program within RSA will be transferred to the ILA
» The ILA will create a substantial return in public investment

Why Move IL, and Why Now?

Respected leaders of both parties in Congress agree that RSA is not the right place for Independent Living, which has serious problems administering the program. CILs and SILCs have suffered as a consequence of their placement under RSA resulting in the reduced functionality of a program that, when run efficiently, saves taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.
» RSA has not attempted to adequately improve the Independent Living Program's review tool in over a decade, therefore the program is not able to effectively demonstrate outcomes to Congress
» RSA has not provided the adequate monitoring and oversight of CILs (2012 OIG Audit)
» RSA did not randomly select CILs as required by the Rehab Act (2012 OIG Audit)
» RSA has inconsistently applied components of the Act regarding SILC duties and activities (from state to state as well as changes of interpretation at federal level)

» Instead of acting as partners, RSA is an outdated paternalist bureaucracy and is inconsistent with the IL philosophy
★*The solution is to establish an ILA, independent of RSA, better equipped to administer the Independent Living Program with more efficiency, transparency, and cost-effective strategy*

How can we get this done?

Take Action: OIL wants our members to urge the Senate to pass S. 1356, the bill that reauthorizes WIA and the Rehabilitation Act, without delay. Remind them that this is **a bipartisan bill that will improve the lives of people with disabilities by strengthening America's CILs & SILCs.**

This August, attend your senators' town hall meetings, call their home offices, and write letters telling them why S. 1356 is important to you and how it will benefit the SILC, CILs, and employment for people with disabilities in your state. **Tom Coburn**, 172 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510 (202) 224-5754, **James Inhofe**, 205 Russell Senate Office Building, Washington DC 20510 (202) 224-4721.

FOCUS GROUP ON DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Employment of People with Physical Disabilities is conducting 90-minute telephone focus groups for people with spinal cord injuries and disorders about their work experiences. They want to know how participants found or kept a job, and what

experiences they faced when hunting for employment.

If any information about this study or your participation is not clear, please email the study staff or call 1 804-828-5956. You may think about or discuss this study with family, friends, trusted professionals, etc. before making your decision.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to actively engage people with physical disabilities in discussions of barriers to employment, work supports, and means of obtaining information about employment services and strategies. To participate, you must be of working age (age 18 to 65) and have one or more of the following disabilities: Spinal cord injury, cerebral palsy, arthritis, multiple sclerosis, or be a young adult (age 18 to 24) with any type of physical disability. You may participate whether you are currently employed or unemployed.

If you participate in the Disability Employment Focus Group you can receive a \$50 gift card.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY AND YOUR INVOLVEMENT

In this study, you will engage in discussions with up to seven other individuals with similar disabilities. These discussions will require no more than 90 minutes of your time.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

As this study primarily assesses information gains and use of the information received, the risks are very low. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable.

HOT DOG PICNIC

Due to Camp PLEA, the picnic will be on Tuesday, June 17th, Chadick Park, at 5:30 p.m. OIL will provide the hot dogs and drinks but **you are asked to bring potato chips or a packaged dessert to go with them.** Call for free, local, lift-equipped transportation.

Transportation

OIL provides lift-equipped transportation in McAlester and the surrounding area, Monday – Friday, 8:00 – 4:30. A twenty-four hour minimum notice is required. The cost is \$1 per pick up in McAlester and \$2 for Krebs and Frink Chambers. Outside this area, fees are based on actual costs of gasoline needed to provide the service.

**Prices are subject to change.*



You can have the freedom that comes with living at home even though you have a long-term illness or disability. The Oklahoma Living Choice Project can help you move out of a nursing home and back into the community.

This project gives Oklahomans like you or your loved one more options to manage health care needs and adds more balance to the state's long-term care system.

If you live in a nursing home and qualify for SoonerCare, then Living Choice may be able to help.

Contact Leah Medina for a referral to the Living Choice Project at (918) 426-6220v/tdd.

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The contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the Department of Education. However, these contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

*Events are held at OIL unless otherwise noted							JUNE EVENTS						
SUNDAY		MONDAY		TUESDAY		WEDNESDAY		THURSDAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY	
1 		2		3 <u>Children's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP <u>Women's Gp.</u> TBA 11am		4 <u>Children's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP		5 <u>Children's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am		6		7	
8		9 <u>Brain Injury Gp.</u> 1 pm		10 <u>Adult's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP		11 <u>Adult's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP		12 <u>Adult's Camp PLEA</u> McAAP		13		14 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am	
15		16		17 <u>OIL PICNIC</u> Chadick Park 5:30 pm		18		19 <u>Shopping</u> 7:00-10:45am		20		21	
22		23 <u>Brain Injury Gp.</u> 1 pm		24		25		26		27		28 <u>Saturday Transportation</u> 8 am	
29		30											
<p>*<u>Low Impact Exercise Class for Sr.'s</u> meets Mon., Wed., & Fri., 10:00 a.m., Stipe Center *<u>Alzheimer's Support Group</u>, 3rd Wed., 12:30 p.m., Main & OK Church of Christ, call Glenda at 916-1210 *<u>Diabetes Support Group</u>, 1st Tue., 6:00 p.m., McAlester Regional Health Center Wellness Conf. Room, contact Kathy at 421-6812 *For information on <u>Men's & Women's Grief Support Groups</u> – call Hospice of McAlester at 423-3911 for their groups or for information on a 7 week <u>Dealing with Grief Course</u> – call Heartland Hospice, at 302-0700, *For information on the <u>Stroke Support Group</u>, call the McAlester Regional Health Center at 426-1800</p>													

