**PRIDE Provider/Peer Mentor Module #6:**

**Centers for Independent Living (CILs)**

Transcript

Hello and welcome to PRIDE Provider Training Module 6: Centers for Independent Living (CILs).

This module features PRIDE partner agency Access Living, a cross–disability organization that is governed and staffed by a majority of people with disabilities.

Module overview. This module includes a case example and covers the following topics: defining independent living and centers for independent living; Access Living, a CIL in Chicago; core services offered by CILs; how CILs can support job-seeking refugees with disabilities; and who is eligible for CIL services.

Independent Living Case Example: Part 1.

Here is a fictional case example that incorporates much of the content of this module to give you a sense of how it would apply to an actual refugee with a disability.

“Fahad is a 20-year old refugee from Iraq. He recently graduated from a Chicago high school and is currently enrolled in community college classes. He plans to transfer to a public university for undergraduate studies.

Fahad plans to rent an apartment closer to the university for easy access to and from classes. He has cerebral palsy and uses a wheelchair. He needs assistance with self-care activities such as bathing, dressing, and eating his meals. Fahad's mother is currently his main caregiver. Fahad will need to connect to independent living resources in preparation for living in his own apartment and for participating in college life.”

What do we mean by “independent living”? Independent living refers to a new frame of reference for understanding disability and societal attitudes toward disability. Independent Living is a philosophy and a way of life. The philosophy of independent living emphasizes equal opportunities in education, employment, and community living for people with disabilities. It is a concept similar to self-determination, which means that every person, regardless of disability, has the potential and the right to exercise individual will and decide how he/she wants to live.

The Independent Living Movement was associated with the Disability Rights Movement of the 1960s. During this movement, people with disabilities began to advocate for the rights and opportunities that had historically been denied to them. The movement was based on the fundamental principle that people with disabilities are entitled to the same civil rights, options, and control over choices in their lives as people without disabilities. The movement emphasized that people with disabilities are the experts on their own lives, needs, and choices, and that people with disabilities should be integrated into the community. Please note that the term “independent living” can be confusing or misleading given the importance of interdependence with others for many people with disabilities. Understanding and explaining that independent living is similar to self-determination can help to clarify the meaning of the term for people with disabilities.

What are Centers for Independent Living (CILs)? Based on the philosophy of independent living, Centers for Independent Living, or CILs, were created. In 1972, disability activist founded the first Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California. CILs are non-profit, non-residential, community‑based organizations that provide an array of independent living services for people with disabilities. CILs are consumer-controlled. In other words, at a minimum, 51% of CIL staff are persons with disabilities, and 51% of Board of Directors are persons with significant disabilities. CILs are cross‑disability organizations that serve people with different kinds of disabilities across the lifespan.

Access Living is a CIL in the Chicagoland area. Established in 1980, Access Living, a PRIDE partner serves the metropolitan Chicago area.

Access Living’s mission is to foster the dignity, pride and self–esteem of people with disabilities and enhances the options available to them so they may choose and maintain individualized and satisfying lifestyles. To this end, Access Living offers peer–oriented independent living services; public education, awareness and development; individualized and systemic advocacy; and enforcement of civil rights on behalf of people with disabilities.

The slide shows the logo of Access Living and a picture of Access living staff standing in front of the Access Living sign.

CILs in Illinois. There are more than 30 CILs serving the rest of Illinois. This slide contains a link to a complete listing of CILs on the Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU) website.

Core services provided by CILs. Centers for Independent Living offer several core services:

One core service of CILs is providing information and referral, which includes information about disability-related subjects, and referral to other resources when needed.

The next core service is independent living skills training that provides real-life training on practical know-how for living independently, from budgeting to traveling, from personal assistant management to job seeking, and more.

Advocacy, both on an individual and a systems level, is another of the core services provided by CILs. CILs are involved in ongoing grassroots organizing in support of disability rights, at the individual, community, and national level.

Peer support and mentoring, provides real problem–solving skills and support for all kinds of issues. Another core service provided by CILs is transition assistance from moving out of nursing homes and other institutions back to the community.

CILs also assist individuals to avoid institutional placement.

And last but not least, CILs work with youth with significant disabilities who are in transition after completion of high school.

How can CILs support job-seeking refugees with disabilities?

The next section of the module describes services for people with disabilities, including refugees, that are provided by CILs in general and by Access Living in particular.

Some CILs offer programs to prepare students with disabilities for college or employment.For example, Access Living’s Beatrice C. Mayer Realizing Education and Advancement for Disabled Youth (READY) Program offers training and consultation for young people with disabilities nearing high school graduation. The training and support focuses on skills they need to make a successful transition to employment or higher education. The slide shows a picture of the first READY program student group with the program staff.

How can CILs support job-seeking refugees with disabilities, continued?

Furthermore, some CILs also offer jobs and internships for people with disabilities. Opportunities available at Access Living can be found using the link on this slide. CILs can also provide financial consultation to improve employment, credit, and homeownership opportunities for people with disabilities. For example, Access Living has a training program called Financial Stability, that focuses on financial education and money management.

Furthermore, CILs can help individuals find and train Personal Assistants to manage daily living and housekeeping. This can be done by keeping a database of Personal Assistants for people with disabilities who want to hire someone for home care services and providing Personal Health Services in the workplace. Personal Assistance Services in the workplace means assistance with performing activities of daily living that an individual would typically perform if he/she did not have a disability. The slide shows a picture of staff and consumers at Access Living.

CILs can also provide personal assistant or PA services. Personal Assistants can support people with disabilities at home or at work in a variety of ways such as, by helping with getting up and ready for work, bathing, dressing, cooking, cleaning, running errands, providing travel assistance, reading printed materials for a Blind person, and ensuring a sign language interpreter is present for a Deaf person.

Another way that Access Living and other CILs support job-seeking refugees with disabilities is by assisting them to find accessible and affordable housing. For example, Access Living administers a Housing Counseling Program that trains people on tenant rights, landlord-tenant relations, and reasonable accommodations for tenants with disabilities. Advocacy is also a very important part of what CILs do. For example, Access Living hosts a grassroots group called Power to the People that advocates for inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of life.

So, who is eligible for all of the services that CILs provide? All individuals with disabilities are eligible to receive CIL services. While having a disability is the primary eligibility requirement for CIL services, certain CILs may have some other specific requirements. Access Living DOES NOT require disability-related documentation or proof of citizenship or immigration from those seeking services. However, in order to receive services from Access Living, it is necessary to be a Chicago resident.

Access Living contact information. Access Living is located at 115 West Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60654. The telephone number is 312-640-2100 for voice and 312-640-2102 for TTY.

How can providers connect refugees with Access Living? This slide provides the contact information for five key departments at Access Living. This information is also contained in the separate resource list for the module.

Independent living case example, part 2.

This is Part 2 of the fictional case example that we began the module with.

“Fahad qualifies for Personal Assistant services for 20 hours a week through Medicaid. However, he is unsure where to begin to find and hire an appropriate Personal Assistant.

Fahad’s medical case manager connects him with the Personal Assistant Coordinator at Access Living. Through Access Living, Fahad receives training in interviewing and supervising Personal Assistants. He is also able to select a few candidates from Access Living's Personal Assistant Database.”

From this case, we can see how Access Living supported a refugee with a disability to achieve his desired living situation by providing him with training in how to find and hire a personal assistant.

The final two slides contain the source information for this module. Thank you for completing PRIDE Provider Module 6 on Centers for Independent Living! Special thanks to PRIDE partner Rahnee Patrick of Access Living for narrating this module.