

Independent Living Services Brochure

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What is Independent Living?

Independent Living means controlling and directing your own life. It means taking risks and being allowed to succeed and fail on your own terms. It means participating in community life and pursuing activities of your own choosing. Independent Living is knowing what choices are available, selecting what is right for you, and taking responsibility for your own actions.

For people with disabilities affecting their ability to make complicated decisions or pursue complex activities, independent living means being as self-sufficient as possible. It means being able to exercise the greatest degree of choice in where you live, with whom you live, how to live, where you work, with whom you work and how to use your time.

What are Independent Living Centers?

- **Consumer Controlled:** Centers are run by a board of directors, more than half of whom are people with disabilities.
- **Community Based:** Centers are located throughout New York State in local communities.
- **Available to All People with Disabilities:** Staff, board members, volunteers, and people served represent a broad cross-section of disabilities.
- **Non-Residential:** Centers are not places to live, nor do they own or operate places for people with disabilities to live.
- **Non-Profit:** Centers are approved for non-profit status with the New York State Attorney General's office.

Who does an Independent Living Center Serve?

- People with all physical and mental disabilities.
- People with disabilities of all ages.
- Parents, spouses, siblings, and significant others of people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities living in their own homes, supported living arrangements, institutional settings, and elsewhere.
- School personnel
- Business and industry
- Local government agencies
- Human Service organizations
- Volunteer sector organizations
- Hospitals, health organizations, and the medical community
- Civic organizations

What Services do Independent Living Centers Provide?

All Independent Living Centers provide a set of core services geared toward promoting self-help, equal access, peer role modeling, personal growth, and empowerment. The scope of services is directed by individual and community needs. The core services are as follows:

- Peer Counseling is provided between two or more individuals with disabilities, to share ideas and experiences about living with a disability, in order to gain greater awareness and control over one's own life.
- Independent Living Skills Training teaches everyday life skills and is often provided by people with disabilities. Training may include budgeting, meal preparation, arranging transportation, or personal assistance services, job seeking, and self-advocacy.
- Information and Referral Services aim to provide individuals with resources and options that may be necessary in making informed choices about living, learning, and working independently.
- Individual and Systems Advocacy addresses access to equal opportunities in exercising social, economic, educational, and legal rights. Independent Living Centers work with individuals, community organizations, state/national networks; to promote full inclusion of people with disabilities, and to improve the implementation of existing laws: federal, State, and local.

Other Services That Are Often Provided Include:

- Housing assistance
- Acquiring and maintaining appropriate benefits and entitlements
- Architectural and communication barrier consultation
- Personal counseling that is non-clinical and short term in nature to address individual goals
- Securing, learning how to use, repair, and maintain equipment
- Assistance in registering to vote
- In-service training, workshops/seminars on disability issues, disability laws and Independent Living philosophy
- Disability awareness training
- Developing Plans to Achieve Self Support (PASS) for recipients of public assistance - SSI/SSDI
- Specialized training and services specific to certain communities

How do I Resolve Disagreements with Independent Living Centers?

ACCES-VR recommends taking the following steps when problems occur:

1. Seek out supervisory staff at the Independent Living Center to discuss your concern.
2. Request a copy of the Independent Living Center's grievance procedure and follow the sequence of steps in the process.
3. Bring your concern to the attention of the President of the Board of Directors of the Independent Living Center in writing. The Center can tell you how to contact the Board President.
4. Contact the ACCES-VR Centers Administration Unit, 1-800-222-5627 (voice/TTY).
5. Contact the Client Assistance Program (CAP) Central Office at 1-800-993-8982 (voice/TTY, toll free). mail@disabilityadvocates.org

How to Find Out More about Independent Living?

The Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR), Centers Administration Unit is responsible for administering the New York State Independent Living Program. For

information about Independent Living Centers and programs in New York State, contact:

Robert Gumson, Unit Manager

ACCES-VR

Independent Living Services

89 Washington Avenue, Room 575 EBA

Albany, New York 12234

(518) 474-2925

Voice, TTY, Toll Tree: (800) 222-5627 (Voice/TTY, toll free)

You may also contact your local Independent Living Center. See the [directory](#) for a Center near you.