



CHARLES D. BAKER
GOVERNOR

KARYN E. POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

MARYLOU SUDDERS
SECRETARY

TONI WOLF
COMMISSIONER

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
600 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02111-1704

(617) 204-3600
1 (800) 245-6543
Voice/TDD (617) 204-3868
FAX (617) 727-1354

Independent Living Centers

Federal Fiscal Year 2020 Activities Report to House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means
03/25/21

Ten Independent Living Centers (ILCs) receive state funding through appropriation 4120-0200. In Federal Fiscal Year 2020 (FFY20), ILCs continued their important work in Massachusetts in assisting people with disabilities to maximize their independence and self-determination in all of life's activities. This includes a focus on helping people to move from institutions into the community and to set and attain personal goals related to independence and self-sufficiency. As consumer-directed organizations, this work is done through a wide range of services which are based on a peer role modeling approach.

During this period, the work of the ILCs and the lives of the consumers they serve were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest concerns raised by consumers was the need for nutritional supports. As congregate meal sites were closed, many feared exposure to COVID-19 by going to grocery stores and few had the income to pay for meal and grocery delivery services. ILCs responded at the systemic level by communicating the urgency of the situation to city and state officials, and by seeking out and helping consumers access resources for food. Activities included collaborating with food banks and other providers to coordinate pick-up and drop off of food boxes, medications, and other basic necessities at the consumers' doors.

Many consumers experienced the loss of access to support systems for their personal care and other daily living needs; and others lost their jobs and social supports. Some were unable to access health care. The ILCs assisted many consumers in obtaining assistive devices or technology to enable them to communicate with service or health care providers, friends, families or PCAs. The ILCs themselves shifted to remote work and developed alternative means of communicating with and serving the individuals they work with.

The core Independent Living services are:

- Peer Counseling – the opportunity to learn from the experience of other people with disabilities who are leading productive and meaningful lives in their communities.

Areas addressed through peer counseling typically include personal growth, problem solving, disclosure, socializing or other issues faced specifically by persons with disabilities.

- Skills Training – the acquisition of skills needed for living independently, such as how to find housing, manage Personal Care Attendant services, budgeting, self-advocacy or managing entitlements or benefits.
- Information and Referral – the provision of information and referral services related to disability such as where to look for accessible housing, adaptive equipment, medical providers, legal assistance and a large number of other programs and resources.
- Advocacy – helping persons with disabilities to know and assert their rights with, for example, the health care system, landlords, accessing financial benefits, and in the community in general.
- Transition services – This core service for ILCs was established under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in December 2015. Transition services include:
 1. Assisting individuals with disabilities to transition from institutions to the community
 2. Assisting individuals who are at risk of entering institutions so that they may remain in the community
 3. Facilitating the transition of youth with disabilities from special education to postsecondary life

Information on the services and achievements of the Independent Living Centers in FFY20 is provided below. This information is based on reports filed by the ILCs for the federal fiscal year (10/1/19 – 9/30/20), the last 12-month period of ILC performance available.

FFY20 Independent Living Center activity

Approximately 32,354 consumers requested and received services from the ILCs in FFY20. The specific services requested and received were:

Services	Consumers Requesting Services	Consumers Receiving Services
Advocacy/Legal Services	1,894	1,871
Assistive Technology	854	841
Children’s Services	115	114
Communication Services	96	85
Housing/ Home Modifications	591	518
Independent Living Skills Training	11,409	11,351
Information and Referral	13,459	13,391

Mobility Training	56	51
Peer Counseling Services	996	984
Personal Assistance Services	14,916	14,806
Recreational Services	154	127
Transportation Services	318	304
Youth Transition Services	1,040	1,010
Vocational Services	174	159
Other – Service Coordination, Options Counseling, etc.	8,364	8,256

Assisting individuals to transition from institutions to the community is an integral element of the ILCs' mission. Of the 512 consumers who set the goal of relocating from a nursing home or institution to community-based living, 198 achieved their goal. This is fewer than in FY19, and is a result of many individuals' fear of COVID-19 exposure in the community and difficulty accessing housing resources. As of the end of September, the ILCs reported 223 individuals still seeking housing.

The Independent Living Centers assist individuals with identifying and working towards personal goals, which are identified in their Independent Living Plan. The types of goals set and achievements during FFY20 are listed below. Compared with FFY19, more individuals set goals in the areas of Communication, Information Access/Technology and Community/Social Participation; areas which related to the impact of the COVID pandemic. Many goals take time to achieve, so consumers may still be working on their goals at the end of the year. Consumers may abandon or change goals as well, so they are not counted as either 'achieved' or 'in progress'.

Significant Life Area	Goals Set	Goals Achieved	In Progress
Self-Advocacy/Self-Empowerment	1,739	612	1,268
Communication	321	95	225
Mobility/Transportation	859	256	523
Community-Based Living	994	434	513
Educational	616	164	399
Vocational	887	248	583
Self-care	17,586	8,531	16,436
Information Access/Technology	652	206	424
Personal Resource Management	1,447	505	848
Community/Social Participation	2,017	516	1,390

The ten Independent Living Centers continue to assist people with disabilities achieve independence and self-determination in their lives and communities, in the face of challenges posed by the pandemic. Their work includes short-term help with accessing community resources, longer-term skills training and peer counseling to help people develop the skills to achieve their goals, and advocacy at the individual and community level to ensure people with disabilities have equal access to community resources. Their work allows individuals of all ages, with any disability, to achieve greater independence.