

**Written Testimony for  
Centers for Independent Living: Fact Finding Hearing  
Provided at the Hearing Held  
Monday, September 13, 2010  
10:00 AM  
Republican Caucus Room 418, Harrisburg, PA**

**Testimony Provided by:           Amy C. Beck, LSW, MSW  
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The Lehigh Valley Center for Independent Living, Inc. (LVCIL), is a 20 year old state-funded Center for Independent Living (CIL) serving the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest metropolitan area of the Commonwealth. I am writing to express my profound concerns over our and the other Pennsylvania State-funded CIL experiences with the OVR Contracts and Grants Management employees.

I have been director at Lehigh Valley CIL for over 11 years, and I was a Board member of the agency for its first four years of operation. I have seen the OVR staff assigned as our agency's liaison change many times, but until the past 2 years a positive working relationship always existed, which benefitted the children, youth, men and women with disabilities we serve. CILs and OVR should both be working to the benefit of persons with significant disabilities; OVR on employment goals, and CILs on all aspects of a full life including, education, advocacy, and community inclusion. I regret to have seen that OVR appears to have forgotten it exists to serve persons with disabilities, and that CILs have the same reason for existence. We should build on mutual commonalities, for example, CILs are staffed by a majority of persons with disabilities, MANY who are past or current OVR customers!

In reality, micromanagement activities of OVR have imposed a significant burden on Pennsylvania's State-funded CILs, and appear to be a waste of the Commonwealth's resources. At LVCIL, the necessity to provide a 100% audit to OVR each month has added the equivalent of a staff person adding three weeks of full-time work to their year. In light of continued loss of State-funded CIL programming funds, we have had no choice but to divert staff time from programs and services to our consumers, to be able to carry out those tasks needed to provide printed verification of a 100% monthly audit.

It appears that the OVR Central staff is making arbitrary demands and decisions with the State-funded CILs. Some of us are allowed to provide less data to receive funds, some of us are required to provide every receipt or invoice, no matter how small. Our Fiscal Coordinator, who holds a BA in Finance and has previously been CFO for a multimillion dollar manufacturing corporation, has not been able to obtain valid reasoning from OVR staff for the eccentric requests which have been made upon us. Let me give you a few examples:

- LVCIL realized we were short \$415.32 in funds received from OVR in the past Fiscal Year. With no explanation from OVR, a RFF was paid to us, less the \$415.32. When we questioned OVR's Chief of Budget, Grants and Administrative Services Division as to what costs were disallowed, **we** were told on numerous occasions to provide an explanation of the \$415.32! However, we were given no idea what was disapproved! We were then actually instructed to submit another invoice for the \$415.32, but we still don't know what costs were disallowed.
- LVCIL typically works with consumers who have extremely low income. These individuals with disabilities, too often, are barely eking out a hand to mouth existence. We have historically received the daily local newspaper to allow consumers to access employment and housing opportunities, as well as sales circulars for their needs. We were told by OVR's Chief of Budget, Grants and Administrative Services Division, and I am paraphrasing, *that everyone knows the newspapers can be read online*. Use of the newspaper for independent living related needs fits well under Act 139. And with our consumers living grossly below the poverty level, most of them do not have a working computer, or computer literacy. Additionally, many areas of the local newspaper do not appear online. We cannot understand this disallowance.

There have been other disallowances of plastic utensils, used in consumer programming, and basic first aid box items. Other PA CILs have been disallowed water and toilet paper, but this had not been a universal decision by the OVR Chief of Budget, Grants and Administrative Services Division. There is no consistency, and frankly, the OVR Chief of Budget, Grants and Administrative Services Division appears to lack a solid foundation in finance, standard accounting principles, as well as a thorough of Act 139, which governs PA CILs. As a footnote, I hold the same degree and credentialing as the OVR Chief of Budget, Grants and Administrative Services Division, and even though I followed the administrative

track in my social work master's degree, it did not require even one basic accounting class; only a few budgeting principles were taught. Perhaps this individual simply does not have the training and education for fiscal management of the CILs.

On behalf of the LVCIL Board of Directors and consumers, I would make the following recommendations to rectify a burdensome and unproductive situation:

1. We ask for an accountant to be available to discuss accounting issues.
2. We ask that CILs be allowed to submit general ledgers and Profit & Loss statements for review as the initial submission.
3. We ask that OVR provide a list of allowable and disallowed expenses.
4. We ask that a cost allocation be provided to OVR.
5. We ask that OVR learn, and abide by Act 139 and Rider B.
6. We ask for written procedures, to make possible consistency from CIL to CIL.

It is my hope a mutually beneficial relationship may once again be established with OVR Central. Thank you for your attention and the opportunity to submit this testimony.