



Center for Independent Living Opportunities

... dedicated to the integration of people with diverse disabilities in all aspects of life

To: Representative Saylor and Committee Members
From: Hillary Hasson, Executive Director
Date: September 13, 2010
Re: House Republican Policy Committee Hearing; Written Testimony

Today you have heard an overview of what a CIL is, where it falls under law, and who funds us. I am the current Executive Director of the Center for Independent Living that serves York, Adams, and Franklin counties. We serve over 900 individuals on a yearly basis working with almost 140 of them on longer, intense self identified goals. I have 3 full time staff, 1 part-time staff, and myself. We travel from the heart of York to the outskirts of all three counties on almost a daily basis to work with consumers, conduct outreach to unserved and underserved individuals, and to participate in collaborative meeting with other partners who serve people with disabilities.

CILs provide the “four core services” – peer mentoring/support, advocacy, skills training, information/referral – as well as myriad other programs based on the specific needs of each community. In addition to serving thousands of individuals with disabilities each year, CILs provide extensive services within the community including accessibility assessments, technical assistance, home modifications, and public education.

I have been a part of the CIL since July 2000 and before I became the Director in 2005 I was the Director of Finance/Assistant Director. It has always been my duty to interact with OVR, provide the reports, respond to emails/calls, submit for funds, and coordinate our “on-site” monitoring visits. Our center has always been small, no more than two-three grants, easily maintained financially, but always short staffed. Prior to 2009, working with OVR was a breeze, submitting our requests for funds were timeless, and reporting was easy. It was never burdensome for me to have a consumer caseload of 5+ individuals and do all the finances for the agency because it was easy.

Since 2009 and OVR’s new requirements my day-to-day financial duties have become burdensome and keeps me from doing all the other things that need to be done (e.g., working with consumers, overseeing staff, daily meetings for outreach, etc.). Not only have we lost funding in the State budget, but I have been forced to lay off staff (25% in one year) therefore taking on more consumer tasks than a normal Director of a CIL so that we do not allow consumers to fall through the cracks ... that is what a CIL is here to do, work with consumers, not be “paper pushers”.

I am looking for a system to be put in place, similar to how it was before, that allows us to do what we need to be doing as a CIL and not spending countless hours using a spreadsheet that is not accounting friendly, photocopying invoices (waste of time), and stop from being “reimbursed” and receive the funds up front. I have no problem being transparent, but I have a HUGE problem being micromanaged by OVR when I have my own Board of Directors who set the budgets, over sees the spending, and we received independent audits.

It is disconcerting that after all these years OVR is trying to unilaterally change policy that is clearly set forth by Act 139. For the past year, we have fought a battle with OVR regarding changes to how we request our funds and what our monies may and may not be used for. When CILs follow Rider B and Act 139 there should be no delay of funds or controversy of how the funds are being used. But when a grant contract is changed from a grant to a reimbursement contract, how CILs deliver services becomes more difficult and cumbersome. OVR needs to fully understand why and for what a CIL exists and realize that the burdens they are putting on us are only hurting our consumers we serve and hope to serve ... not us as staff and/or directors.