

# NORTH DAKOTA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022



NORTH  
**Dakota**  
Be Legendary.

Statewide Independent Living Council  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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# MESSAGE FROM THE NORTH DAKOTA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL CHAIR

As the Chair of the North Dakota Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) I am honored to present this report that summarizes the goals and accomplishments of the past year. The SILC is a policy making council of volunteers, appointed by the Governor, whose membership must include a majority of individuals with disabilities. It is the SILC's responsibility to collaborate with State entities and the Centers for Independent Living (CILS) in the development and implementation of a three-year plan of Independent Living activities in the State. The CILs are community based and consumer-controlled organizations, located in each region of the state which are at the core of implementing services to support independence for individuals with disabilities. Priorities of the SILC three-year plan include:

- Facilitating the transition of persons with significant disabilities by increasing the number of individuals with disabilities who reside in their chosen, least restrictive community environment.
- Increasing Independent Living Program capacity through infrastructure and resource development in advocating for full funding for community-based Centers for Independent Living.
- Facilitating outreach to individuals with disabilities and other stakeholders who are underrepresented and/or underserved in communities across North Dakota.
- Advocating for the transition of youths with disabilities, including youth who were eligible for individualized Education Programs as they prepare to or have completed secondary education to postsecondary life.
- Facilitating public forums in each area of the state to increase the knowledge of the independent living philosophy and services among individuals with disabilities and the public.
- Facilitating collaboration with state councils, agencies, and organizations to enhance the service, opportunities and rights of North Dakotans with disabilities.

Council members have a deep appreciation for the dedicated CIL staff, and we applaud their many achievements. The SILC will continue to fulfill the role to advocate and work to strengthen service in North Dakota to advance and achieve meaningful independent living outcomes.

Sincerely,

Russ Cusack, ND SILC Chair



# WHAT IS THE ND SILC?

The North Dakota Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) advocates for North Dakotans with disabilities to remain as independent as possible. The SILC promotes independence, inclusion, dignity, and participation to all citizens as we all have a right to enjoy same rights and opportunities.

The SILC is a Governor appointed Council. The council has statewide representation and is made of individuals with diverse disability backgrounds. Also represented is the Center for Independent Living (CIL), tribal, community service providers, other agencies, and Vocational Rehabilitation. We look for individuals passionate about the independent living philosophy, while helping identify societal barriers, working with stakeholders to increase the supports to make North Dakota accessible to all.

Quarterly meetings are held in February, May, August, and November in a hybrid manner (in-person and virtual), so everyone feels welcome to attend.



## MISSION

The mission of the SILC is to lead the Independent Living Network (North Dakota Centers for Independent Living) by developing resources and advocating for full community participation of North Dakotans with disabilities.

## GOALS

The SILC and the CILs will:

**Goal I:** Improve service outcomes to North Dakotans with disabilities.

**Goal II:** Increase understanding of the independent living philosophy with those served and other supporting them.

**Goal III:** Partner with the Designated State Entity and collaborate with other disability organizations.

**Goal IV:** Recruit and maintain active cross-disability, consumer-controlled membership to ensure the Statewide Independent Living Council functions optimally.

# THE PHILOSOPHY OF INDEPENDENT LIVING

## What is Independent Living?

CILs believe that every person, whether possessing a disability or not, has the right to make decisions about their own life. It is believed that all people should be able to take risks, design their own destinies, be allowed to succeed or fail, but most of all have the right to choose.

Independent living's fundamental principal is "empowerment". It is about choice and respecting each person's understanding of what independence is for them. This philosophy means being able to exercise the greatest degree of choice about where you live, whom you live with, how you live, where you work and how you use your time. It means participation in community life and pursuing activities of your own choosing.

"Define Success on your own terms, achieve it by your own rules, and build a life you're proud to live."

~ Anne Sweeney

## Philosophical Tenets of Independent Living:

**Equal Rights:** People with disabilities have the same rights as all other citizens. This is the basic philosophy underlying independent living programs.

**Integration:** Integrated programs, services and facilities, are essential for people with disabilities to enjoy equal access to cultural, vocational, residential and leisure opportunities open to other people. Everyone has a right to such integrated experiences.

**Self-Determination:** People with disabilities are entitled to choose the patterns of life and conditions of everyday living like everyone else does. They have the right to privacy, a home, work, going to school, leisure activities, social interaction, sexual relationships and life in a self-determined setting in an integrated community neighborhood.

**Equal Responsibility:** Just as people with disabilities have the right to self-determination, they have the responsibility to follow through with their commitments in good faith and with due consideration of the rights of others. They are accountable for their own actions.

# SILC OVERVIEW

The ND SILC plans for the coordination and expansion of independent living services in ND. They advocate for full community participation of North Dakotans with disabilities.



## THE COUNCIL

The SILC collaborates with four ND CILs to work on identifying issues important to all people with disabilities which need to be addressed at the State and Federal level. They obtain input from CILs, consumers, and other partners in the development of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). The SILC works to build partnerships to address disability issues and to promote public policies and programs consistent with independent living values.

- Promote the IL philosophy and movement
- Provide input on IL throughout ND
- Provide Recommendations
- Identify financial resources and assess budget needs to support all aspects of the IL program
- Recommend ideas for research, training, legislative activities, and needs assessment
- Assist with the SPIL
- Coordinate activities with other councils
- Advocate for disability rights and related issues

## SUBCOMMITTEES

The SILC has three subcommittees, with each member being assigned to at least one. The subcommittees carry out the main work of the SILC. They are responsible for devising a work plan outlining their duties related to the SPIL.

- External Affairs
- Internal Affairs
- Governance

## MEMBERSHIP

The SILC is made up of members appointed by the Governor, a majority of individuals with disabilities and do not work for state agencies or CILs (consumer controlled).

The council must have 16 members representing:

- 2 CIL Directors/Reps
- 1 Rep from Vocational Rehabilitation
- 1 Rep from a State Agency
- 1 Tribal Entity Rep
- 2 Reps from Quadrant 1 (Williston/Minot regions)
- 2 Reps from Quadrant 2 (Devils Lake/Grand Forks regions)
- 2 Reps from Quadrant 3 (Fargo/Jamestown regions)
- Other members:
  - Consumers
  - Parents/guardians
  - Advocates
  - Others as appropriate

# THE SILC COUNCIL

## MEMBERSHIP AS OF FEBRUARY 2023

**Brittney Hogan, Chair**

Fargo, ND

**Angie Bosch**

Director of a CIL

**Jan Beddes**

Bismarck, ND

**Robyn Soiseth**

Williston, ND

**Nancy Lundon**

Devils Lake, ND

**Shannon Cook**

Kenmare, ND

**Chelsy Sondrol**

Vocational Rehabilitation

**Russ Cusack**

Bismarck, ND

**Gillian Plenty Chief, Vice Chair**

Tribal Entity Representative

**LaRae Gustafson**

Representative of a CIL

**Leon Dietrich**

Bismarck, ND

**Emma-Leigh Miller**

Carrington, ND

**Hope Wolbert**

Minot, ND

**Alexandria Brown**

State Agency Rep

**Joe Yasenchack**

Harvey, ND

## NON-COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS

**Aimee Volk**

Liaison for the SILC

**Scott Burlingame**

Director of a Center for  
Independent Living

**Damian Schlinger**

Director of Vocational  
Rehabilitation

**Royce Schultze**

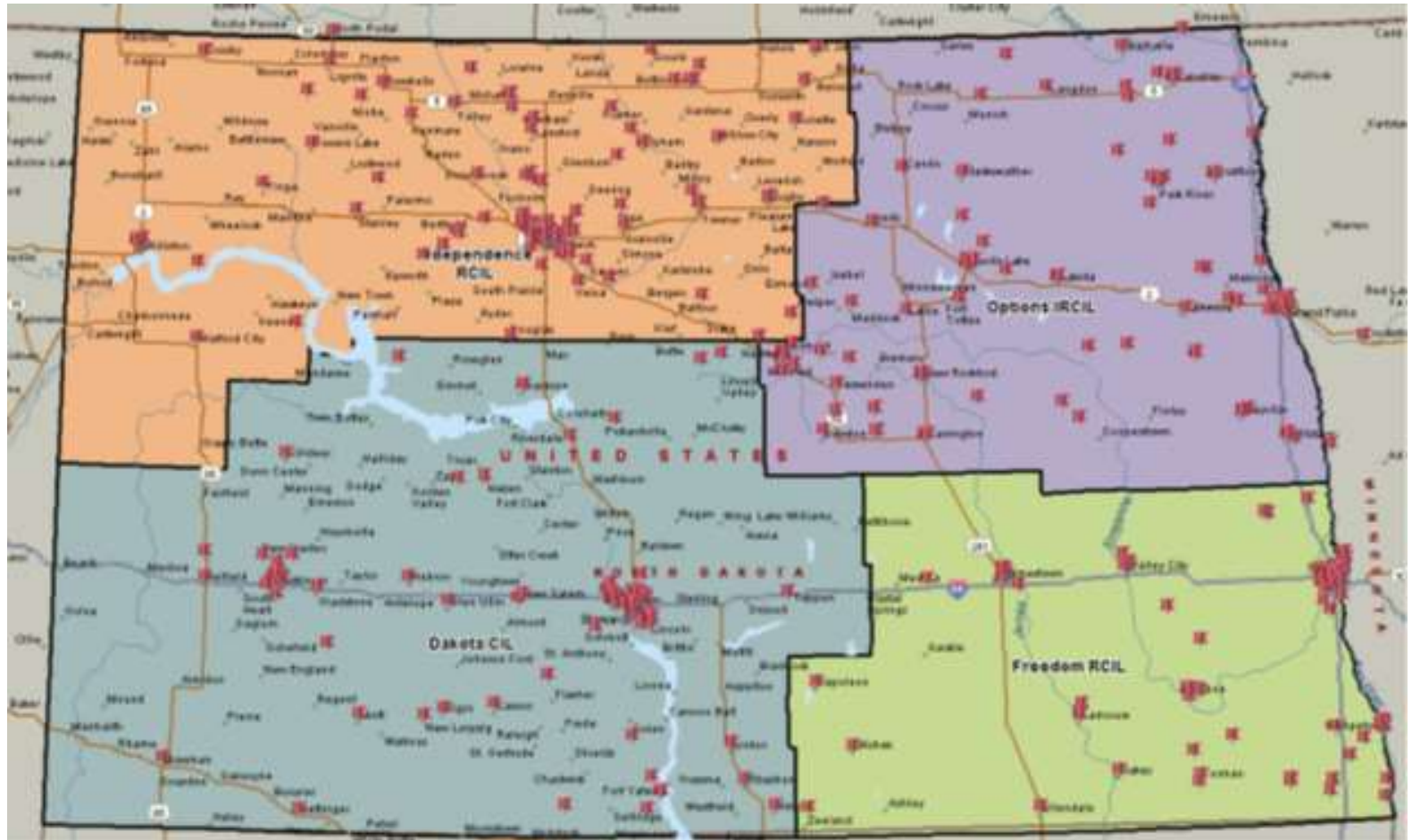
Director of a Center for  
Independent Living

**Randy Sorenson**

Director of a Center for  
Independent Living

# NORTH DAKOTA CENTERS FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

There are four CILs in North Dakota that provide statewide coverage. The state is divided into four quadrants to ensure that all North Dakotans have availability to services. This is a scatter map showing the areas where consumers were assisted from October 2021 through September 2022



## **Independence, Inc.**

315 3rd Ave SW  
Minot, ND 58701  
701-839-6561  
TTY: 701-839-6561

Branch office in  
Bottineau, ND

## **Options IRCIL**

318 3rd Street NW  
East Grand Forks,  
MN 56721  
218-773-6100

Branch offices in  
Harvey, Cavalier and  
Devils Lake, ND

## **Dakota CIL**

3111 E Broadway  
Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58501  
701-222-3636 or  
800-489-5013

Branch office in  
Dickinson, ND

## **Freedom RCIL**

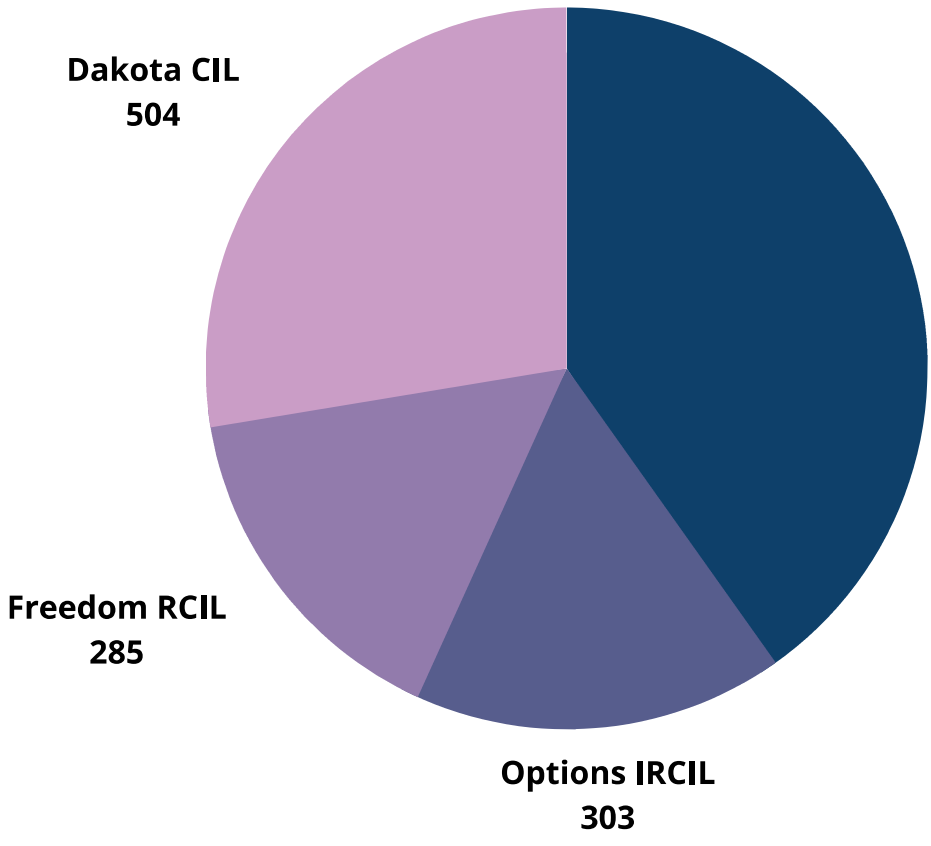
2701 9th Ave S,  
Ste H  
Fargo, ND 58103  
701-478-0459 or  
800-450-0459

Branch offices in  
Jamestown, Lisbon,  
and Wahpeton, ND



# FFY 2022 DATA - From the CILs

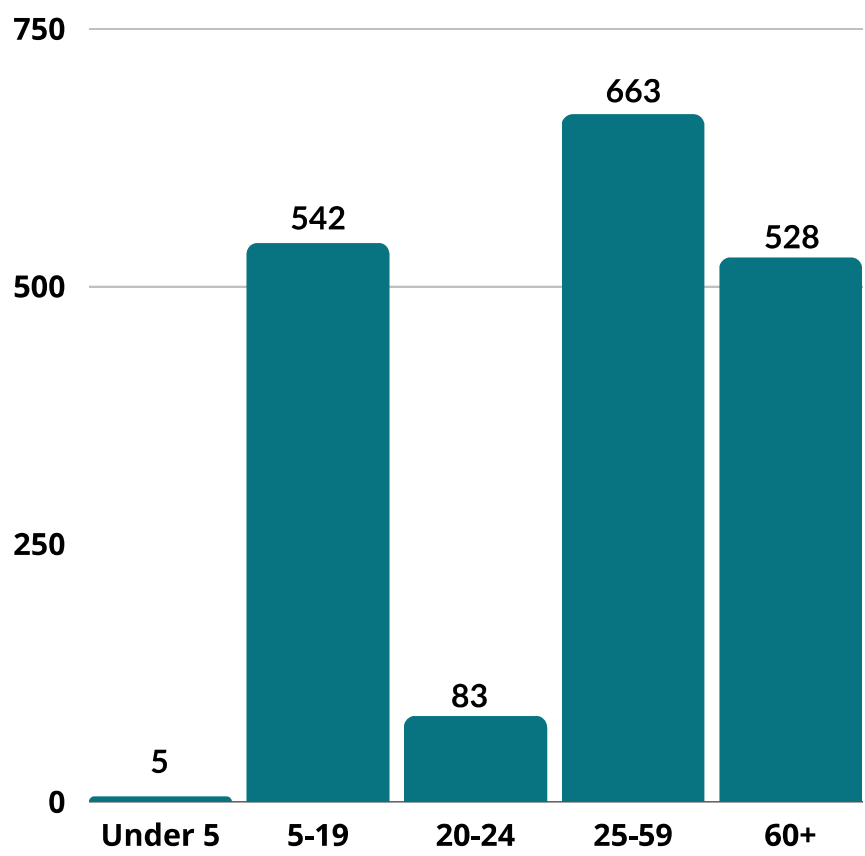
(October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022)

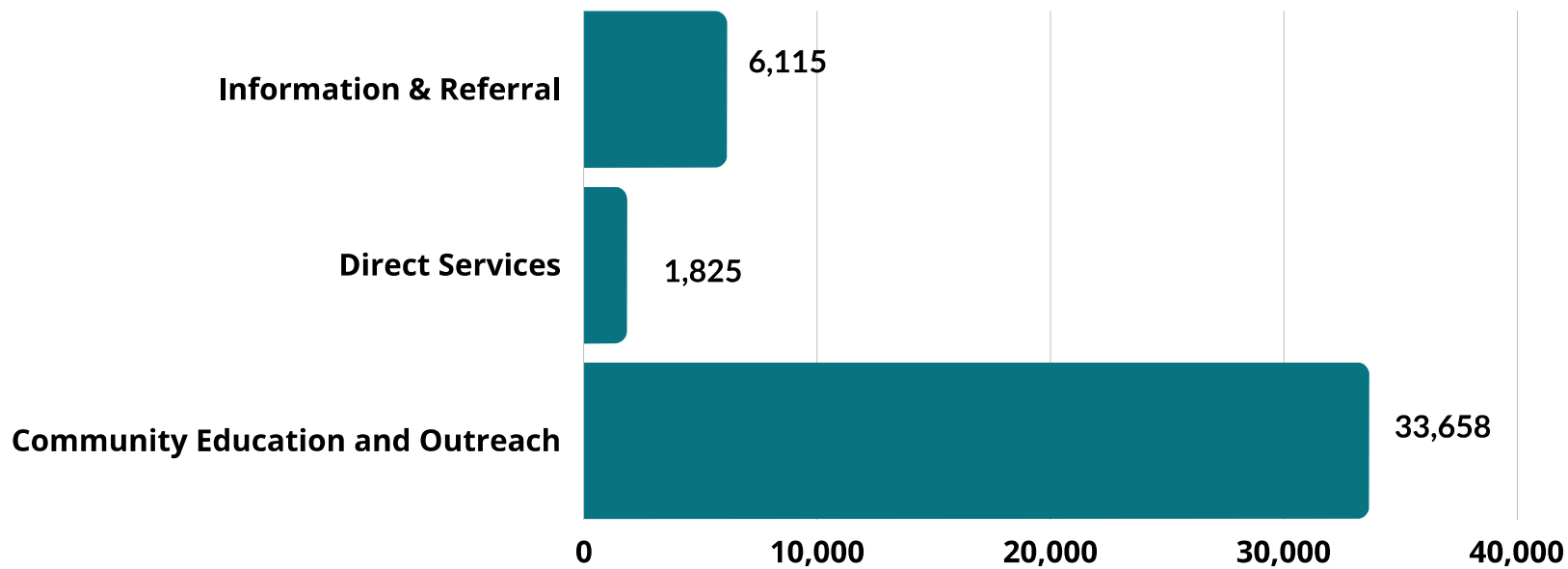


Independence, Inc.  
733

The four North Dakota CILs served a total of **1,825** people through direct services in the past year.

The CILs serve consumers of all ages throughout the state.



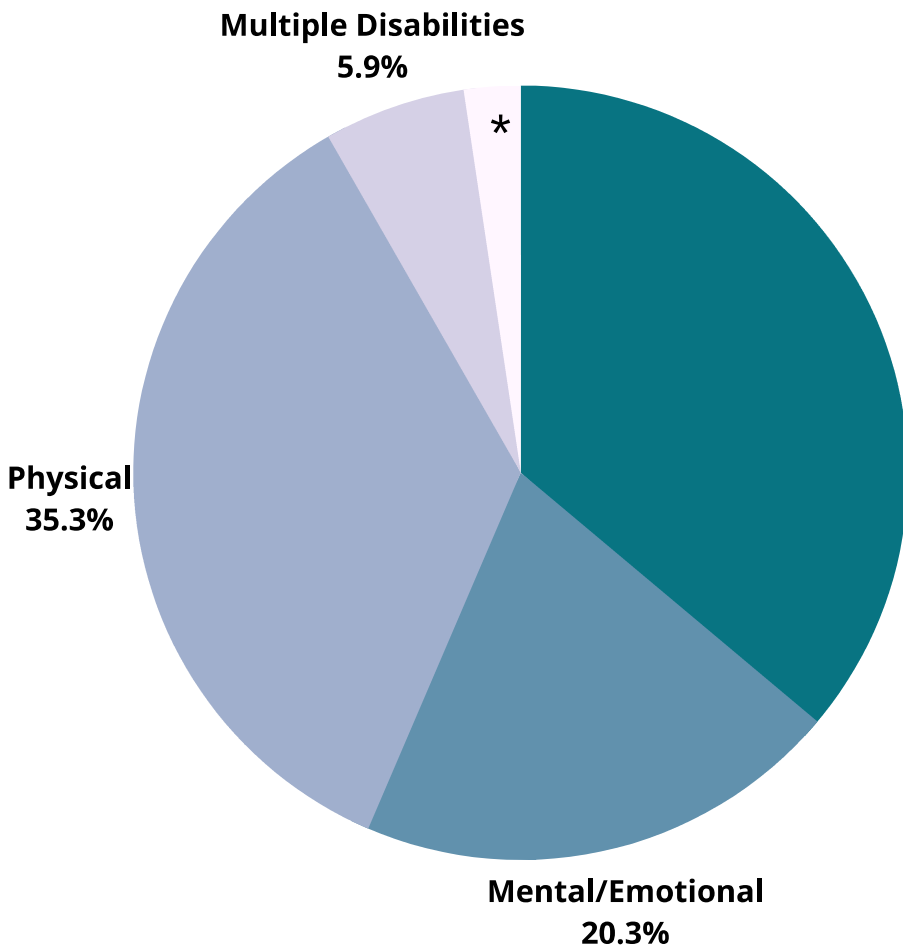
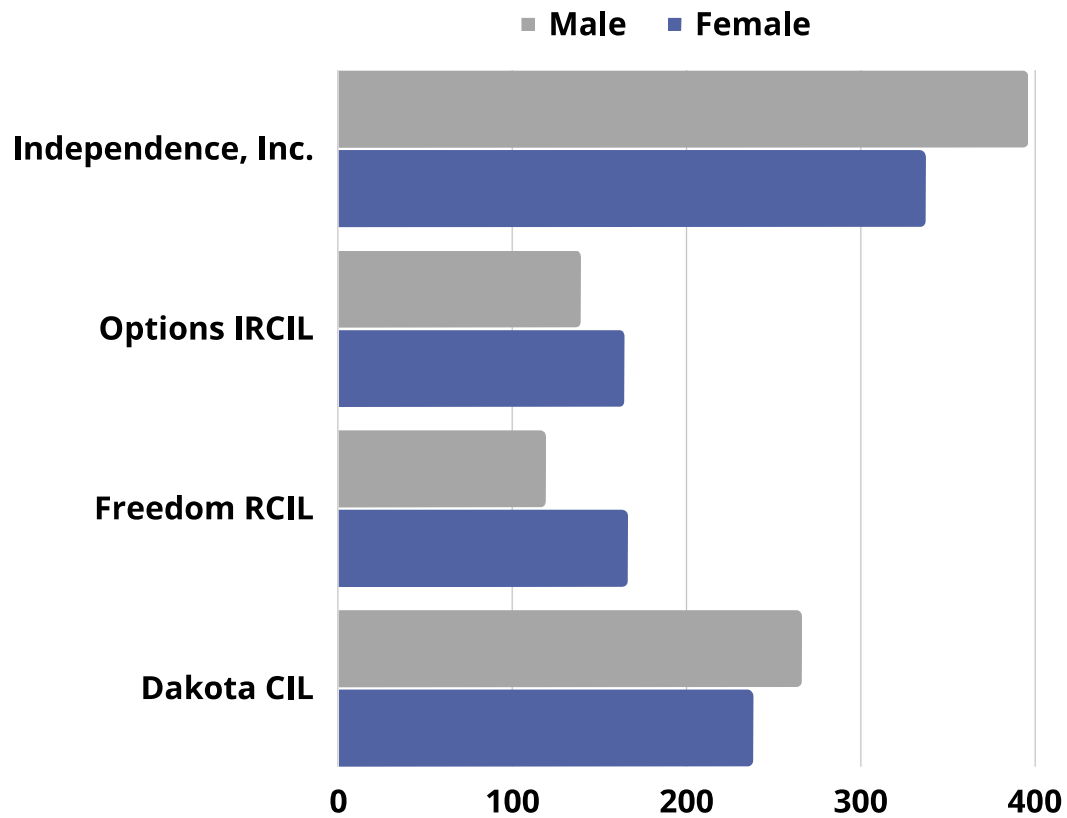


**Direct Service:** Provide one-to-one services to persons with significant disabilities. It offers more intense assistance in identifying and resolving the barriers that hinder them from living at the highest level of independence possible.

**Information and Referral:** Provide information to persons with disabilities, service providers, and community members on disability and independent living topics and issues.

**Community Education and Outreach:** Educating the community of the issues and barriers affecting persons with disabilities. Outreach activities are designed to educate people about independent living and increase the usage of the CIL.

Our CILs are able to respond to the local needs of the people and communities they serve.



Cognitive  
36.1%

The CILs are uniquely able to serve people with all types of disabilities.

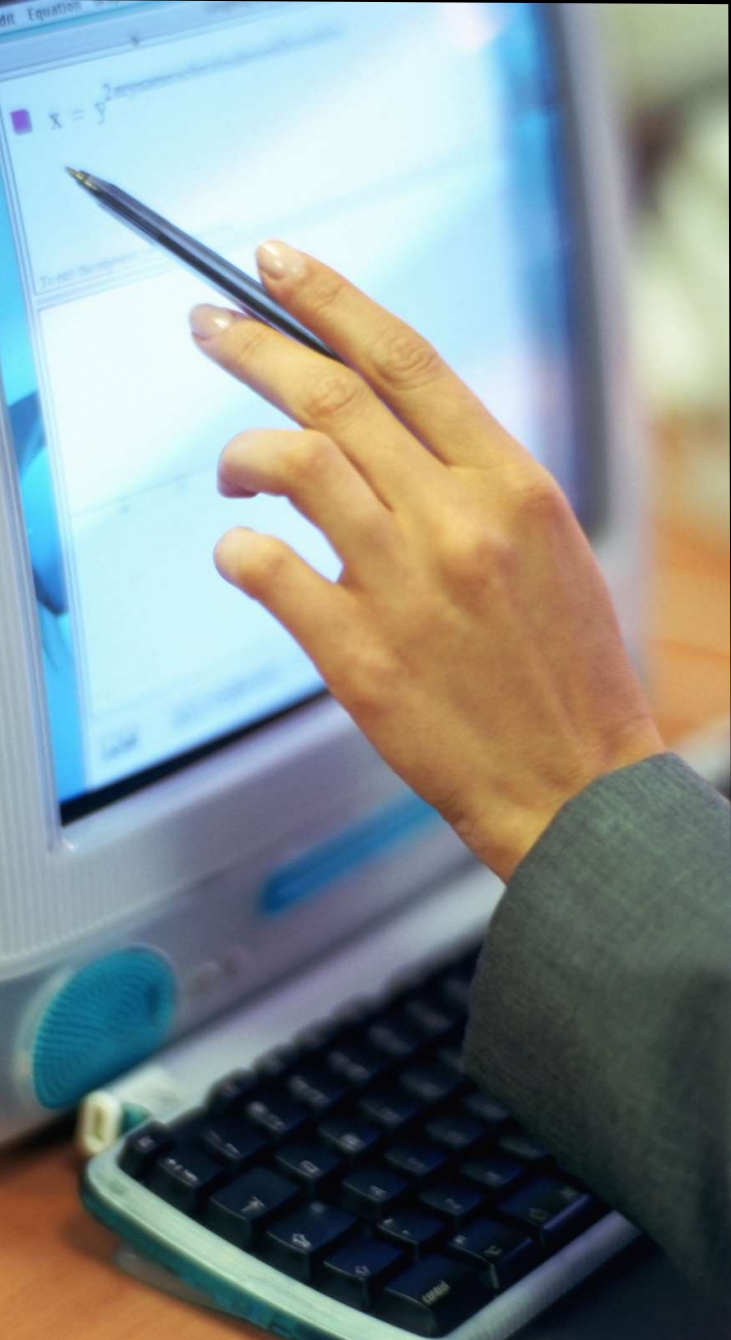
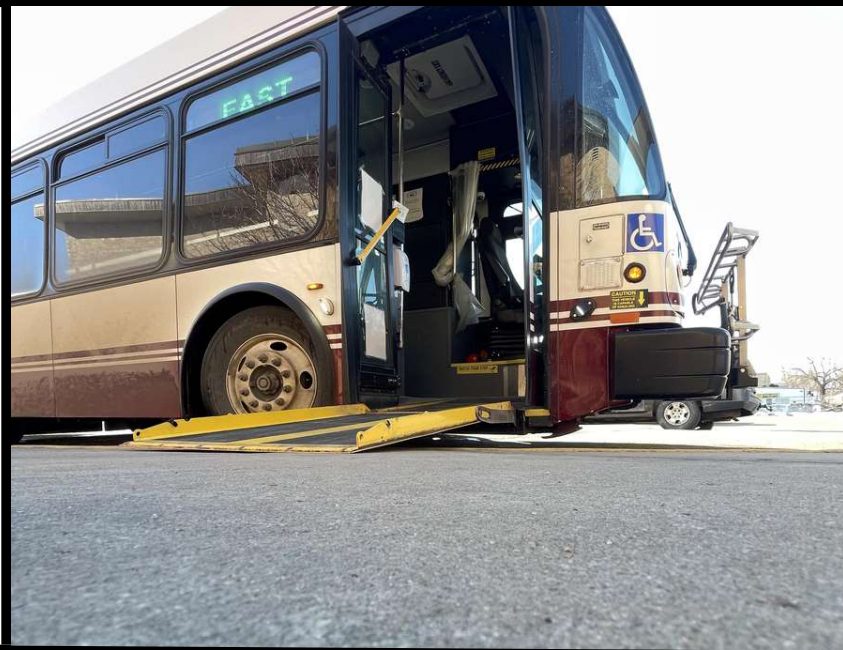
\*The category of 'Other' includes vision, hearing, and other disabilities.

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE - SUCCESS STORIES

## Independence, Inc.

A 37-year old man worked with Independence Inc. staff to get a state ID, learn about the bus system, learn computer skills, and find a job.

Independence Inc. staff explained the bus system to him. Afterwards, he regularly took the bus. Independence Inc. staff showed the man how to create an email address and apply for jobs online. After applying for a job at a restaurant, he took the bus to a job interview and got the job.



## Dakota CIL

Since I was diagnosed with a tumor in my right eye things have been much more challenging. After radiation treatment and total loss of vision in that eye, my concerns about the future created some enormous stress. One of the big things that helped me was participating with Dakota Center for Independent Living. Their staff always gave me some hope when I came into the office and I always left encouraged, inspired and somehow knowing that my life is different now but things would work out. The services they have provided have helped to keep my head above water. They provided me with encouragement and support as I filled out applications for needed services.

I will never forget receiving the call from you stating that Dakota Center for Independent Living would be able to assist with the purchase of a special computer monitor designed to reduce eye strain and allow me to work from home. This has been the most encouraging thing that has kept me moving forward, with education and training on the use of this monitor, I am now able to work as much as four hours per day and that is all thanks to Dakota Center for Independent Living.

My life has improved so much thanks to your support.

# Options IRCIL

For many people with disabilities, especially older persons with disabilities, maintaining their rural homes is very difficult due to a lack of money and difficulties in finding people to do the work. If a person's home is a danger to them living there they can become institutionalized just as easily as those who are lacking accessibility features in their homes.

A multi-year project was recently completed which involved Options assisting a person with funding and finding help to remove a deck that had become dangerous and installing new steps and a ramp. In addition to the exterior work the individual also needed accessibility upgrades so the bathroom was updated to include a walk-in shower and high-height toilet. This was accomplished by identifying and utilizing various funding sources.



## Freedom Resource Center

In December of 2020, Mirt's leg gave out. After an ambulance ride to the hospital and emergency surgery, a rod was placed in her leg. She was told she would spend the rest of her life not being able to use her leg.

Determined to make her own choices, Mirt reached out to Freedom Resource Center. With the help of Freedom, she had a temporary ramp installed in front of her home. Mirt stated that this ramp was "a God send. I needed peace of mind when I went home to live alone that in case of fire I could safely get out of my home."

Thanks to a lot of hard work, Mirt is now able to bear weight on the leg. She continues to gain strength and confidence in herself as she enjoys her home and is hoping to attend events that are held at Freedom every month.

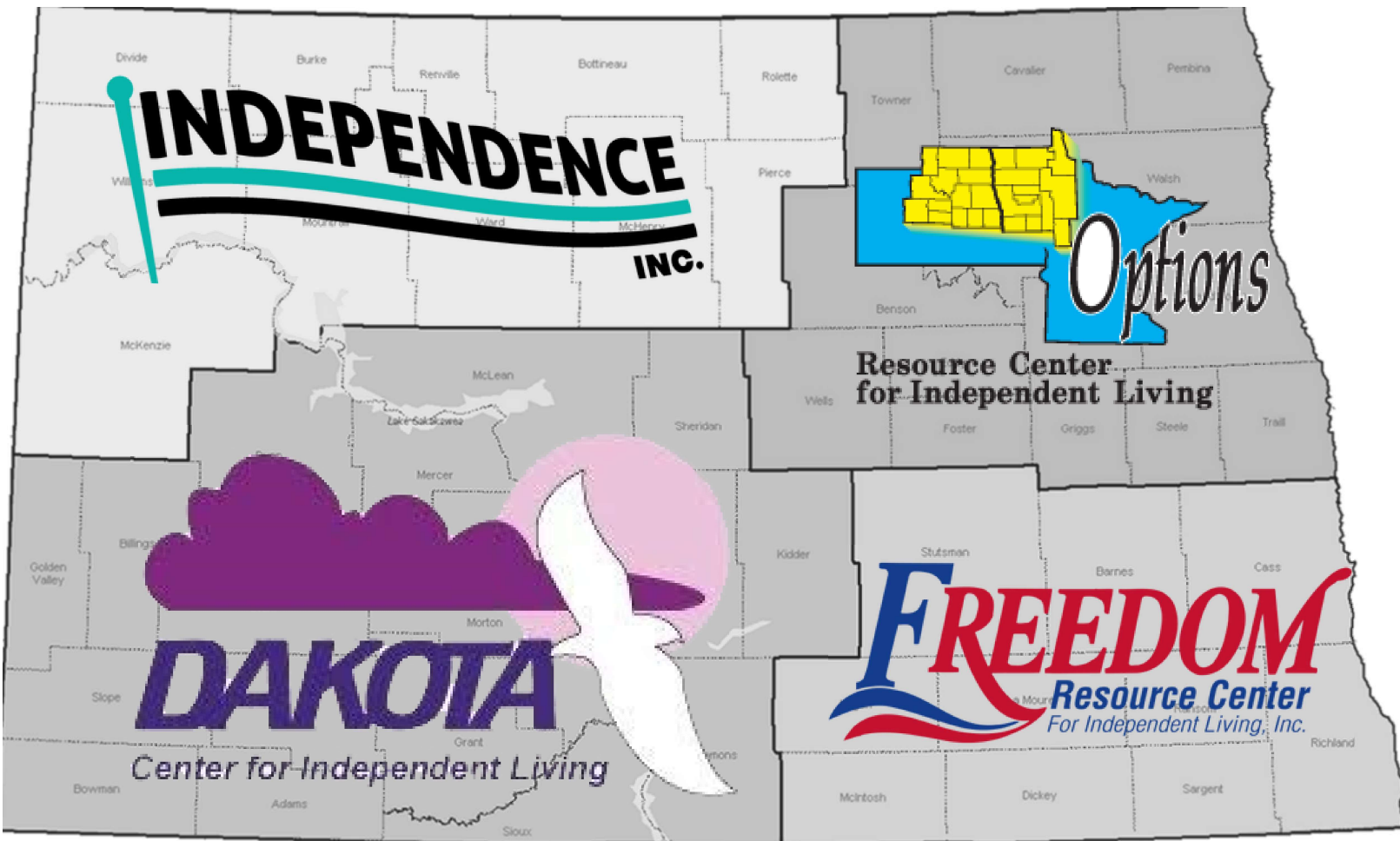


To find out more about the **Statewide Independent Living Council**, please visit:

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/vr/councils-and-partners>

For any questions, please call:

**1-800-755-2745**



For more information on which Center for Independent Living can assist your area, please visit:

<http://www.ndcil.org>