



2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**MINNESOTA
STATEWIDE
INDEPENDENT
LIVING COUNCIL**



OCTOBER 1, 2018 — SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL?

The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council (MNSILC) is authorized under the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Members are appointed by the governor to provide guidance to Minnesota’s independent living services. The council’s main responsibilities are to develop, monitor, review, and evaluate a State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL). For more information on the council, including how to apply, see the MNSILC website at mn.gov/deed/silc.

MNSILC Mission

The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council advances the philosophy of independent living and promotes the integration and full inclusion of people with disabilities into Minnesota communities.

MNSILC Vision

The Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council will engage Minnesota communities to recognize and champion the critical needs of people with disabilities and promote statewide coverage by Centers for Independent Living.

MNSILC Members

Jessica Andrist	Zainab Jama	Anita Olson
Tammie Campbell	Mary Koep	Mark Smaaladen
Crystal Fairchild	Gloria LaFriniere	Annette Toews
Melissa Doherty	Linda Lingen	Brian Wagner
David Fenley	Larry Lura	Brad Westerlund

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to the Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council's (MNSILC) annual report on independent living programs and services.

MNSILC members are appointed by the governor. MNSILC, along with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), is tasked with statewide planning for services to people with disabilities.

In Minnesota there are eight CILs that provide direct services to people of all ages and disabilities. While each CIL has services unique to its area, all eight are mandated to provide five core services. The core services are: advocacy, information and referral, independent living skills, peer support and mentoring, and transition.

This year MNSILC chose to highlight advocacy, a concept that has been an integral part of the independent living movement from the beginning. Through the advocacy efforts of people like Ed Roberts, Judy Huemann, Marca Brisco, and so many others, people with disabilities are able to live the life they chose. They are able to be a part of the community they chose to live in, to realize the dreams and plans they have for their lives, and to participate in the activities they choose.

We know that past advocacy efforts have made a significant difference in the lives of people with disabilities. However, there is still work to be done and the CILs provide a platform and options for people to learn advocacy skills and implement them in their communities and for themselves. Through the efforts of the CILs and the people who access their services, advocacy is alive and well in Minnesota.

Throughout this annual report you will find stories about advocacy and the impact on communities and individuals. Also included is annual data on the services provided by the CILs.

Gratefully,

Anita Olson



Anita Olson, MNSILC Chair



THE “I WANT” DREAM

BY JOHN B

Submitted by Independent Lifestyles Center
for Independent Living (ILICIL), Sauk Rapids, MN

I dreamt the “I Want” dream for years. This dream always started out and ended with the same thing: I wanted a place of my own. Between the start and ending were millions of other things I wanted – a Stetson cowboy hat, a car, a pet, a job, an opportunity to travel. I am developmentally disabled and had been living in a group home for over 17 years. It was hard, but I had to share – and I want more!

There were a lot of people who said my dream would never happen. I told my social worker of my dream and she believed it could work. She set up meetings for me to meet with an Independent Lifestyles housing coordinator. We talked a lot. It was not easy, but I shared my dream with her. She listened and believed it could work and I was thrilled! A budget was worked out. I could not afford an apartment, but she told me it would work if I got a roommate. We looked for roommates. It took a long time, but we found the perfect guy to be my roommate. He is calm and easy to talk with, but he doesn't talk too much.

I now have two part-time jobs. I was able to pass my driver's test. I got a car and now drive everywhere. I had to learn when to move my car from the parking lot due to snow. If you don't move it on time it will get towed, and it will cost a lot of money. Believe me, I know!

I am working on cooking, cleaning, and personal hygiene. I work with my team on my goals four times a week for an hour or two each time. We have a schedule that I try to follow; it is made of pictures because I don't read, but I continue to dream and will learn to read someday.

I can keep all my clothes now and do not have to throw them away. I have kept my dad's suit. I purchased a Stetson cowboy hat and received a fringed leather jacket as a gift. I am learning how to play guitar.

I have a pet lizard, Lizzie. With team support, I learned how to keep Lizzie healthy.

Big dreams mean big money. I am learning about budgeting with team support and a rep payee. My team helps me weekly with budgeting. Last year I went on a trip to the Bermuda Triangle and returned! This year I went to Singapore. Who knows where you will find me next year!

My “I Want” dream came true. I now live independently.



that's
Lizzie!

Independent Lifestyles, located in Sauk Rapids, has an independent living program that is truly integrated and independent assisting people with disabilities in developing independent living skills. The process can be lengthy but based on John's success stories – it is well worth it!



A VERY PERSONAL HUNT EXPERIENCE

AS TOLD BY CORPORAL JON SCHNEIDER, U.S.M.C.

Submitted by Access North – Center for Independent Living Northeastern Minnesota, Hibbing, MN

I love bragging to people about being an outdoorsman, but the truth is all I can remember is killing a couple squirrels for survival. Only my kids and family remember how I was before my disability. It’s frustrating to not have those memories anymore for myself. When I look at my pictures from the past it’s like looking at someone else’s life.

But I can now proudly say “I went hunting!” and it was an experience I want to keep forever. It was relaxing and at the same time exciting and challenging. It’s amazing how Access North has gone from advocating for me, teaching me how to advocate for myself, showing me how to overcome all challenges, and finally challenging me with such memorable experiences.

When I now experience adversity, I see an opportunity to become stronger thank you so much for making me a stronger hunter (with a great aim!) and a smarter person who will never take no for an answer or accept defeat.

Thank you all who made this happen, I love being a part of this program!

YOUTH TRANSITION CLASSES

Submitted by Marie Fouquette, Freedom Resources, Fargo/Moorhead

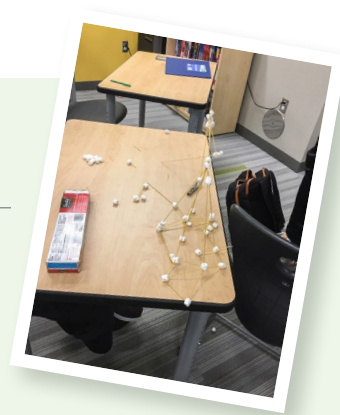
Freedom Resource Center provides Youth Transition Classes in three schools, one area learning center, and one of the only non-profit autism organizations between Moorhead and Minneapolis. We provide skills training to 38 transition age youth, who learn soft skills related to employment and life after high school. Skills include communication, enthusiasm and attitude, teamwork, networking, problem solving and critical thinking, professionalism, the hidden rules of class, eight resources to success, budgeting and financing, vocational planning, and the path forward.

Students usually learn more when they have hands-on activities that really engage them in the skills we are teaching. In one such activity, students use teamwork to create the tallest freestanding structure they can, in 15 minutes or less. Teams choose a team leader who is permitted only to give teammates directions in the activity, but not to help with the actual building. Once they’re finished building, the students follow up with questions about teamwork. What makes teamwork difficult? What would you do differently if given another opportunity? What were the positives and negatives of having a team lead who was unable to physically participate?

The winning structure usually has a solid and wide foundation, as shown in the accompanying photo.

This important work assists individuals in building confidence and figuring out what they may want to do after graduation. Students have learned to identify their disability. Many didn’t realize that anxiety and depression are classified as disabilities. Others were unaware of why they had an IEP. As a center for independent living, and as advocates, we have the unique ability to work with youth in the school and continue to provide services after post-secondary life. We facilitate classes which empower students to share their stories and find perspective. We build strengths and come up with solutions to break down barriers.

Students gain the ability to use skills they learn through our Youth Transition Classes to find and maintain employment while also understanding how to communicate as a team and become independent members of their community.





INDEPENDENT LIVING AND A NEW GENERATION OF HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS: A PROFILE OF NICHOLAS WILKIE

Submitted by Kelly Krantz, Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, St Paul, MN

Nicholas Wilkie has been spreading awareness about independent living his whole life. More recently, he's been bringing his unique blend of experience and training to students planning to enter the field of human services. For over 10 years, Nick has been presenting to undergraduate and graduate classes majoring in fields such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, human services, and health care. Nick works at Metropolitan Center for Independent Living as IL Coordinator and cares greatly about the needs and hopes of transition-aged young people. He is a person with a disability, cerebral palsy, which enables him to connect the philosophy behind independent living with real life experiences.

Schools such as the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State University in Mankato have worked with Nick over the years to help young people get acquainted with the principles of the independent living movement. For every presentation that Nick does, he says, "It's not uncommon in presenting to students that there will be people who have never heard of IL philosophy before."

For the first time this year, Nick presented to high school students who are considering going into health and human services at an event called Scrubs Camp. Held at Saint Paul College, about 100 young people attend a weeklong summer camp. Nick was asked to educate the group about career areas such as disability services. It was a great opportunity to plant the seeds of independent living, disability awareness, and to emphasize the importance of going beyond the medical model when connecting with disabled people.

Having worked as an individual advocate, Nick brings to his presentations the knowledge of what it takes to support people becoming the best advocates for themselves. "Offering support, offering tough love when needed, and disability awareness in general" are some of what he cites as key to building a good relationship with consumers, supporting them to set and reach goals. He coaches these future health and human services professionals to empower their clients to be good self-advocates: engaging them in making decisions about their own care and services, having high expectations for participation in those self-directed services, and fostering a sense of agency, self-confidence, and independence in the people they serve.

So what does Nick hope will be the result of this work? "Good vibes for the medical field!" This would include medical staff asking for more feedback from their patients, increased transparency for a higher level of informed consent, people making decisions about their medical care based on options presented rather than decisions being made without them, health care professionals not making assumptions about someone with a disability, and taking the awkward out of the human side of health care. It is his hope that these lessons will stick with the future health care professionals and that they will bring an independent living informed approach into the field with them.

COLLABORATION EFFORTS BETWEEN OPTIONS INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER, EAST GRAND FORKS, AND WHITE EARTH VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Submitted by White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program, Naytahwaush, MN

The White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program is extremely pleased with the support of Options Interstate Resource Center, East Grand Forks.

White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program receives every disability related call. It is imperative that, if the individual is not eligible for VR services to meet their unique and individual independent living needs, we can offer referral and supportive services.

Options staff have been enormously accommodating and we value their support. Their staff comes to the White Earth office every Tuesday and meets with consumers with their Social Security questions and assistance, students and families on an Individual Education Plan, housing and employment issues.

We have had several collaborative trainings:

- Educating staff of the HR Department at our casino, which is our biggest employer. They did an amazing job educating the casino staff on disabilities.
- White Earth hosted a meeting with nursing staff, and Options assisted the nursing program with technical devices and support to loan equipment.
- Options assisted with remodeling, making handicapped accessible bathrooms, and accessing ramps.
- They offer mediation in the event of discriminatory issues with housing and employment.
- They offer annual training to the various tribal entities working with persons with disabilities.

We highly value their knowledge, expertise, guidance and support.

ADVOCACY FOR A STUDENT WITH AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN

Submitted by Southeast Center for Independent Living (SEMCIL), Rochester, MN



SEMCIL staff was approached to assist a young person with the Individualized Education Plan that the school had built for the student. The student had some troubles with being disruptive in the classroom, but the school's strategies to address these issues were not agreeable to the student or the family. If misbehavior happened in the classroom, the student was to remain quiet and stationary in a designated spot in the classroom for five minutes. If noise or movement occurred during that time, the five minutes would be restarted, until the student successfully remained still and silent for the duration. Clearly, this is a punishment strategy. However, the plan also had a "restitution" attached to the behavior as the student would be required to complete a task such as clean the white boards or wash the tables.

The student and their family were not willing to agree to these strategies. The proposed style of punishment would not be recommended for a student who did not have disabilities. The fact that behavioral modification practices of decades ago are still recommended for students with disabilities is troubling, but through the work of advocates at Centers for Independent Living, these practices, and those in the same vein, are being challenged.

SEMCIL staff met with the student and their family, developed a plan that was rooted in positive supports for behavioral modification, and worked with them to remove the punishment-based plan that the school had developed. The intervention that SEMCIL staff provided in this circumstance ensured that the student was not treated in a humiliating fashion and ensured that the rights of the student were upheld.

Advocacy is a pivotal aspect of Centers for Independent Living, not just to advocate for change on behalf of an individual with a disability, but more importantly, to help people with disabilities find the confidence to advocate for themselves in all aspects of their lives.



IMPROVING ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORTATION IN SOUTHWEST MINNESOTA

Submitted by Southwest Center for Independent Living, Marshall, MN

Finding a means to get to where you need to go in and between rural communities in Southwest Minnesota can be very difficult. Resources are limited, and many smaller communities have no accessible or affordable transit options. Because equal access to transportation is needed throughout this region for all people to live, work, and play, the Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL) works to improve access to affordable, accessible transportation through community advocacy efforts and individual training services.

In 2019 this included involvement on various transit-focused groups. During a MnDOT planning workshop on connected and automated vehicles (CAVs), SWCIL offered insight to potential issues and safety concerns specific to individuals with disabilities: the need to address chair tie-downs, loading/unloading, and other functions drivers might normally perform for individuals with disabilities. SWCIL staff serving on the MN Council on Disability continued advocacy efforts to improve accessibility at state parks and to amend state policies to allow reimbursement for personal care attendants to drive individuals with disabilities to work, appointments, and other activities. SWCIL staff also participated in a MnDOT transportation equity interview, informing MnDOT on barriers to transportation in the region.

SWCIL staff serve on six local United Community Action transit advisory committees representing Cottonwood, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Pipestone, and Redwood counties. These groups worked to improve local transit by promoting and establishing new transit agreements, a new bus route connecting rural towns, transit staff training on understanding mental health disabilities, an additional accessible bus, and added bus stops near low-income housing. While improved accessible transit options are needed, access to public walkways, streets, and bus stops are equally important. An accessible bus does little good if the bus stop cannot be found or reached. To help address public access concerns in Marshall, SWCIL conducts assessments of public transit areas. In 2019 this included 30 bus stops, various walkways, and 15 intersections. Updated information on the accessibility and functionality of intersections, crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals, and curb cuts was provided to the Marshall City Engineering Department and MnDOT. The City has maintained communication with SWCIL on issues requiring correction including repairs and improvements to signs, pushbuttons, audible signals, and visual warnings.

SWCIL also offers transportation related training services, including learning the Minnesota driver's manual and how to use available local transit. In 2019, 57 individuals achieved transportation related goals with SWCIL. Eleven of these individuals gained their driver's permit. One young woman passed the driver's exam using adaptive learning techniques. In rural Balaton and Tracy communities, workers can now use a bus to reach employment in Marshall, one of the area's larger towns. Each of the many successes from 2019 carry forward SWCIL's efforts into 2020, continuing to promote change that creates inclusive rural transportation.

CITIZENS FOR ADVOCACY PROMOTE PEDESTRIAN ADVOCACY

Submitted by SMILES Independent Living, Mankato

SMILES has renewed its commitment to advocacy with an inclusive vision that addresses accessibility in the broadest sense. SMILES has reshaped and created a paradigm shift on how people with disabilities are viewed and reframed their experiences in overcoming barriers.

We've helped to organize a grassroots movement called Citizens for Accessibility (CFA) in Mankato and Fairmont. These groups meet monthly to find ways to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities by eliminating architectural barriers through awareness, education, and teamwork. They work collaboratively with city, regional, and state officials to organize seasonal pedestrian safety campaigns and create unique events that underscore the importance of pedestrian safety and accessibility for all community members.

CFA groups are people with disabilities who live in income and disability related housing in Mankato and Fairmont. While their housing is located in vibrant neighborhoods, they have rarely been included or invited to participate in neighborhood activities, associations, or local events. This is changing.

CFA members started attending neighborhood association meetings – and their input was instrumental in shaping new parks and playgrounds as well as renovating older parks. Accessibility is key. Who better to ask than someone in a wheelchair who takes their child to play in the park?

Second, our seasonal pedestrian safety campaigns are striking a chord not only with the disability community but with all citizens, and especially with our local politicians. The CFAs have made great strides in Fairmont and Mankato toward changing local snow removal ordinances and creating an awareness of the barriers created when sidewalks and curb cuts cannot be navigated due to snow and ice accumulation.

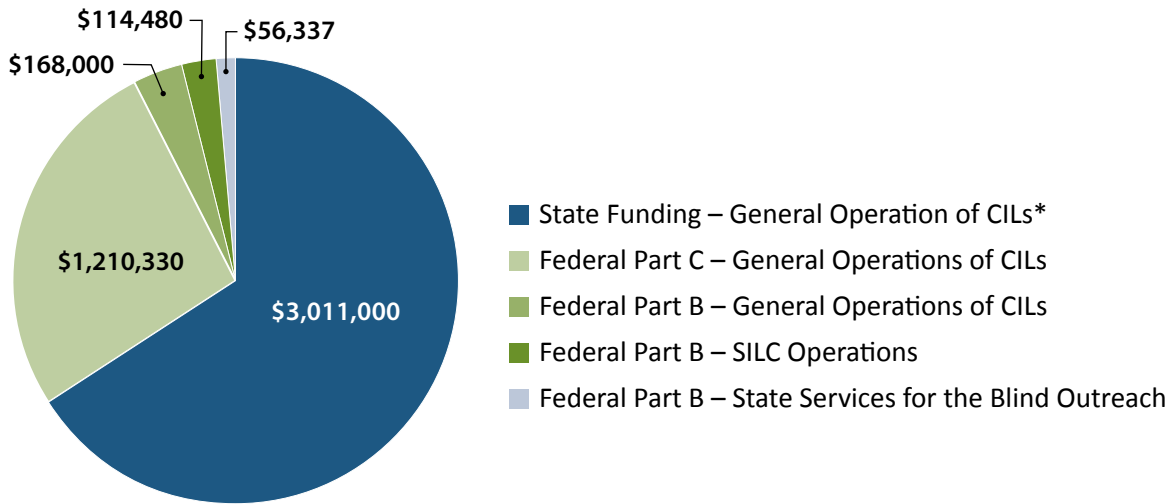
Distracted driving is a huge concern for all pedestrians – no matter how they walk! People in wheelchairs and walkers are at risk because they feel more vulnerable. Often, they are unable to navigate crosswalks at an expected level of visual recognition – and they need more time. Lighting, timing, auditory prompts, and signage have been discussed and improvements have been made.

Training and grassroots advocacy have created opportunities for people with disabilities to have their voices heard. Because CFA members are not just complaining, but actively seeking positive solutions, their concerns and solutions have been taken into consideration. Their advice has been sought by local, city, regional, and state agencies. Experience = expertise.

The CFA groups have been creative in their messaging. Yes, traditional messaging works, but these groups think outside the box. A perfect example is ChalkFest, a free community awareness event. Most recently, ChalkFest was honored by Greater Mankato Growth with a Creative Placemaking Award. What an honor! But just wait, we are not resting on our laurels, ChalkFest 2020 will be bigger and better.

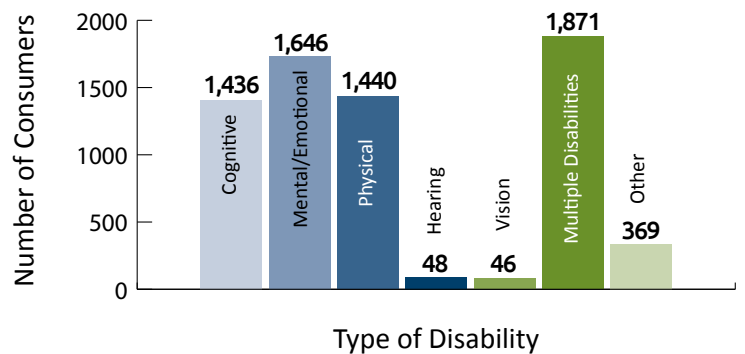
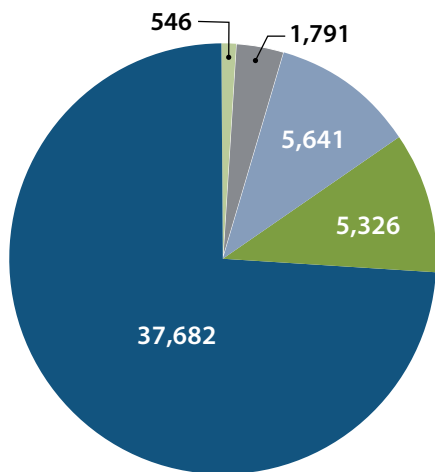
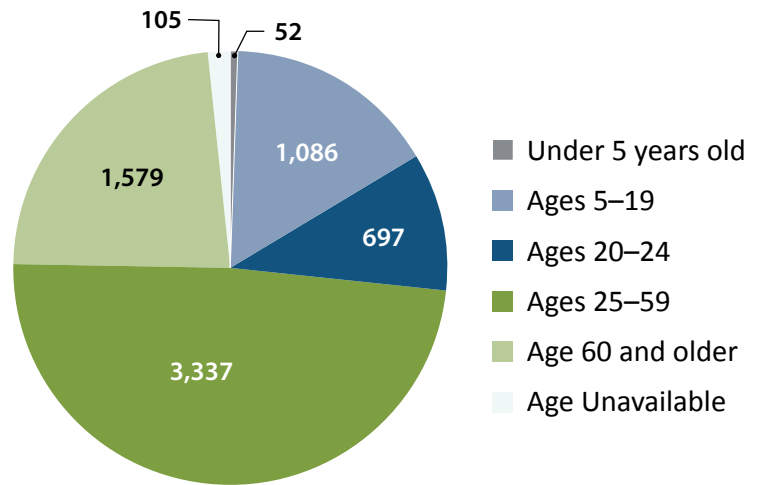


Independent Living Funding Distribution

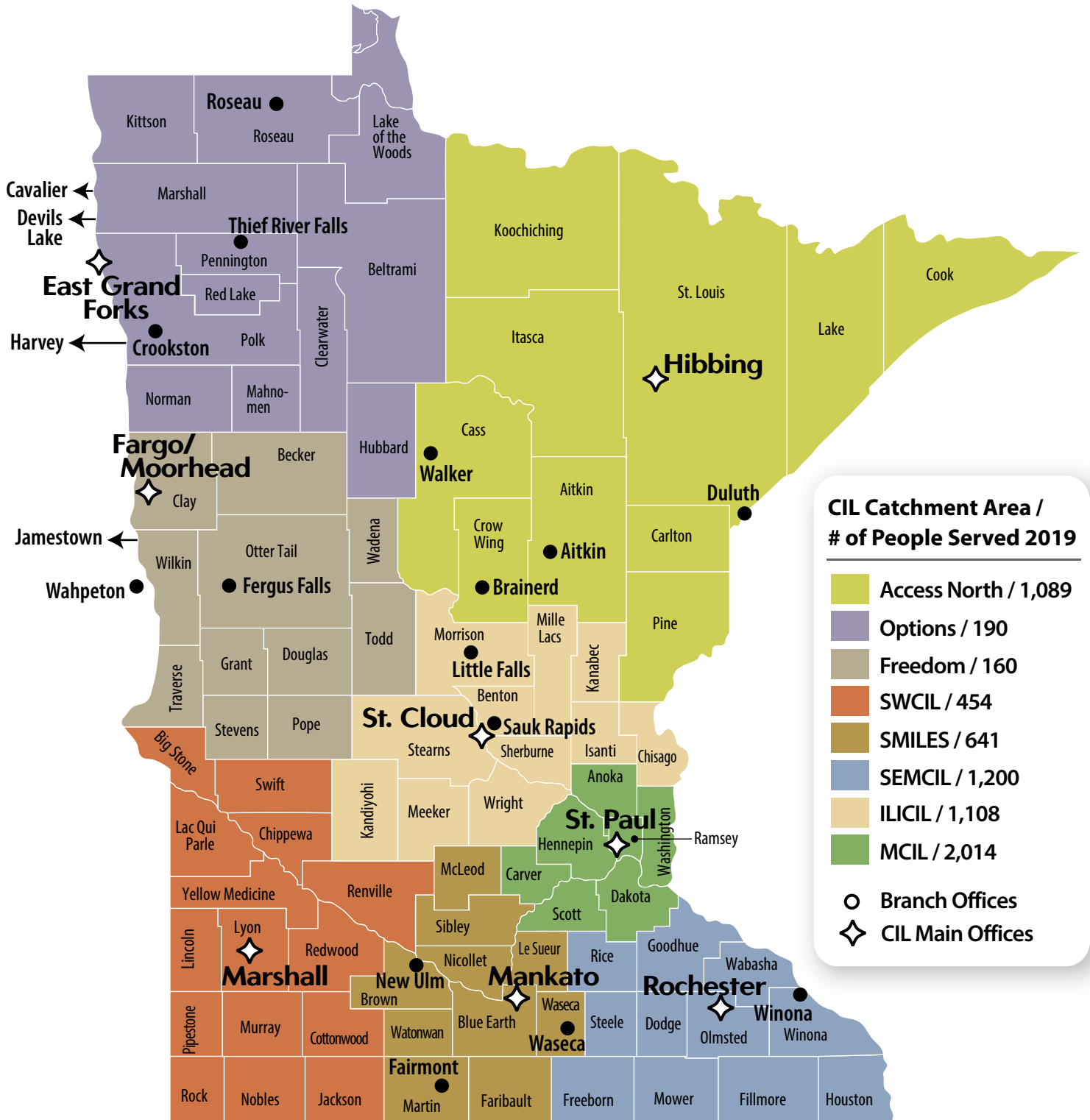


Total Number of People Served by Centers for Independent Living

In FFY 2019, 6,856 individuals were served by Minnesota’s eight CILs which provided a total 55,819 received services, including the Independent Living (IL) core services.



- Advocacy
- Peer Counseling
- IL Skills Training
- Transition Services
- Information and Referral



MNSILC has worked collaboratively with many partners. Working together to improve the ability of Minnesotans with disabilities to live independently benefits our entire community.

The following partners were instrumental in the work done by this council:

- Access North Center for Independent Living
- FREEDOM Resource Center for Independent Living
- Independent Lifestyles, Inc. - A Center for Independent Living
- Metropolitan Center for Independent Living
- OPTIONS Interstate Resource Center for Independent Living
- Southern Minnesota Independent Living Enterprises and Services
- Southeast Center for Independent Living
- Southwestern Center for Independent Living
- Department of Employment and Economic Development
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
 - State Services for the Blind
- Minnesota Council on Disabilities
- State Rehabilitation Council-General
- State Rehabilitation Council-Blind
- Olmstead Implementation Office



For more information about the Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council or to request an alternative format go to: mn.gov/deed/silc or mnsilc1215@gmail.com or call: Jo Erbes, Coordinator at **612-518-1487** or **MN Relay at 711**.