

ILRU NetWork

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SURVEY GIVES “BIG PICTURE” VIEW OF SILCS

...by Richard Petty,
IL Net Director

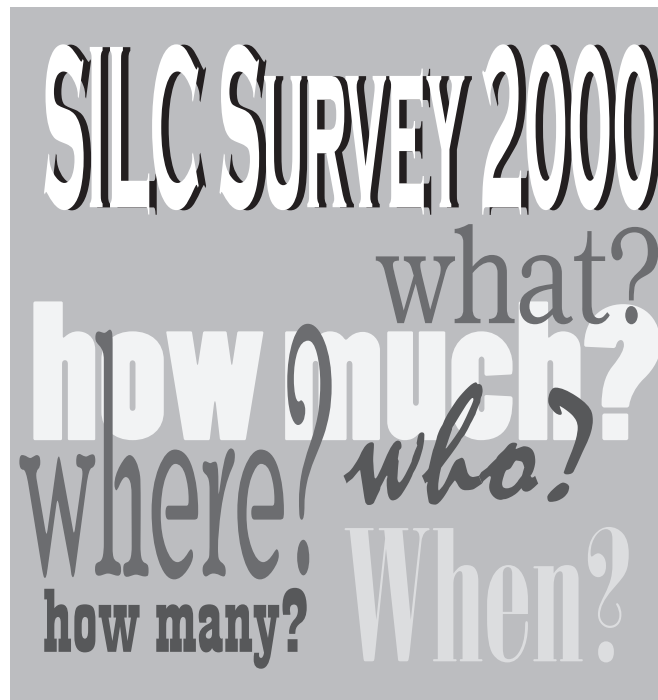
If you pay much attention to weather forecasts, you're bound to be familiar with the “satellite view.” It's the big picture—the broad overview—taken from a vantage point that allows us to observe patterns and trends we might not notice from our own back porch. In this issue of *ILRU NetWork*, we offer readers a first glimpse of the results of the SILC Survey 2000.

This is the third such survey conducted over the past five years. Like the satellite picture, it provides us with a global view of the progress and development of statewide independent living councils in the U.S. and its territories. ILRU has been closely involved with the nation's SILCs since their inception—from providing training on roles, responsibilities and development of the state plan to bringing SILCs together in an association and underwriting the SILC Congress. We are pleased to have yet another opportunity to contribute to the growth of SILCs.

While ILRU consultant Bob Michaels is only beginning his analysis of the responses, we're optimistic that this round of surveys will provide us the clearest, most complete picture yet. SILCs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and two U.S. territories returned completed surveys—the most ever. That may be due, in part, to the “new and improved” survey instrument.

Based on experience with the previous two surveys, we knew we needed to modify some of the questions to make them as relevant as possible to the largest number of SILCs. For that we relied heavily on the guidance of a small but diverse group of SILC leaders. The high return rate and quality of the responses we received is evidence that not only did our advisors do a good job, the participating SILCs put a lot of time and effort into answering the questions. We thank them all for a job well done.

With more analysis, we'll be able to draw some conclusions about the implications of the responses, but we're taking the opportunity now to share the basic results with the independent living community. If tradition holds, a more detailed analysis of the survey findings will be a major topic of discussion at next year's SILC Congress. By publishing these early results, we hope to “jump start” the interesting dialogue that historically accompanies the release of the survey results.



SILC SURVEY NOTES

- SILC Survey 2000 is the third survey of statewide independent living councils in the past five years. ILRU's Independent Living Research and Training Center funds the survey.

- Participation in this year's survey is the highest yet. Fifty-three SILCs—out of a possible 56—returned completed surveys.

- In addition to all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana submitted responses. The territories of Guam, Samoa and the Virgin Islands did not

return surveys.

- Several financial questions that appeared on previous surveys were dropped from SILC Survey 2000. Responses to those questions in the first two surveys were so varied—the result of such things as different record-keeping systems, varying degrees of financial management skill, etc.—it was impossible to draw meaningful conclusions from them.

- SILC Survey 2000 included one new question to determine how many SILCs have established a base funding level for centers for independent living in their states.

SILC Survey 2000 “Sneak Preview”

Editor’s Note: Following is a preliminary summary of responses to SILC Survey 2000 as reported by Bob Michaels, ILRU project associate. Michaels stresses there is more to be gleaned from the data he is analyzing, especially as it is compared to the results of the previous two surveys. He’ll provide additional information in the coming months and plans an in-depth discussion during SILC Congress 2001.

“ILRU deserves our thanks for supporting the SILC Survey. This survey is an absolutely critical study to help SILCs know what’s working—and why,” Michaels says. “It’s a major contribution to the field of independent living.”

How many people serve on the SILC?



Based on the responses of 53 SILCs, it appears the typical SILC has 18 members. Of those, approximately 14 to 15 are voting members. Three to four are nonvoting members (usually state agency reps). These numbers are pretty much the same as reported in the previous two surveys.


How many of the SILC members are employed by a CIL?



How many SILC members are CIL directors elected by other CIL directors to represent them on the SILC?

In spite of the legal requirement that at least one CIL director serve as a SILC member, six councils report they do not have a director on board. Michaels speculates that this may be the result of lagging governor appointments. Forty SILCs report having one director as a member. Seven report having two or three directors. The average number of CIL directors serving on the 53 responding SILCs is 1.21.

How many disability groups are represented?



SILCs were given a list of five disability categories—physical, sensory, cognitive, mental and multiple. Of the 53 SILCs responding to this question, 17 SILCs reported representation from all five disability groups, and 15 reported having four of the groups represented. The remaining 21 SILCs reported representation from three or fewer of the disability groups.

All of the responding SILCs reported having at least one person with a physical disability. Forty-nine reported SILC members who have sensory disabilities, and 42 reported members with multiple disabilities.

People with cognitive disabilities, historically the group with the lowest representation, appear to be making a comeback as SILC members. Thirty-six SILCs reported members from this category, a considerably higher number than reported in the previous surveys.

People with mental disabilities are now the least represented among SILC members. Twenty-three SILCs report at least one member with a mental disability.

Which ethnic minorities are represented on the SILC?




Thirty of the 53 SILCs responding to the survey say they have at least one African-American member. Twenty report having at least one Hispanic member, and 16 report at least one Native American representative. Six SILCs report members who represent the Asian/Pacific Islander minority group. And, one state reports Native Hawaiian representation.

Is the SILC a non-profit?




Michaels says 15 SILCs are non-profit organizations—four more than reported in the last survey. The final count required some double-checking, he says, because there continues to be confusion among some SILCs regarding what constitutes a true non-profit organization.

How many paid SILC staff?



SILCs were asked to indicate how many staff members they have in each of three categories—management, clerical and other. Forty-five SILCs say they have some paid staff. Thirty-nine have somebody in a management position, and 31 have clerical staff. Eight SILCs report staff in other categories.

Who is the employer of the paid SILC staff?



Twenty-five SILCs say they employ their own staff. In 12 instances, the designated state agency hires the SILC staff, while nine SILCs report that another entity employs their staff. Eight SILCs responded that the question is not applicable to them.

Offers First Look at Important Stats

9 & 10

Does the SILC have office space?

Where is the SILC office space located?

Forty-one SILCs have their own office space. Twelve don't.

Fifteen SILCs say they office in government buildings, while 18 report working in their own office space. The remaining 14 responded with "other" or "N/A," indicating SILC staff works from a home office, shares office space with other nonprofit organizations, etc.

Does your state plan identify a minimum base funding level for centers?

15

The same number of SILCs report their state plans include a specific minimum base funding level as those who say they don't—23 in each category. Seven SILCs reported that their plans include a minimum funding level, but did not specify the amount.

Based on the number that reported specific dollar amounts, it appears the nationwide average base funding level is \$250,434. Most fall within a range between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

11

How many full SILC meetings are held annually?

Thirty-five SILCs report meeting four times a year.

Six say they meet 10-12 times, and a dozen meet 5-7 times. SILCs were asked to count only full meetings and not committee meetings.

12

Where are SILC meetings held?

Thirty-two SILCs report they hold meetings in a

central location, while 24 say they hold meetings in statewide locations. The total includes SILCs that checked both options.

What is the SILC budget?

16

SILCs were asked to report operating and project expenses separately, with the sum of those categories comprising the total budget. All but one of the 53 SILCs responding to the survey reported having a budget. The average operating expense per SILC is \$114,000.

The average SILC project expense is \$143,600. On the average, the total budget per SILC is \$245,041.

13 & 14

How does SILC get input?

The top three ways that SILCs report getting input are public forums, surveys/needs assessments and conferences, in that order.

Interestingly, only one of the three—conferences—ranked among the methods deemed "most effective." In fact, a close look at the contrast between the input methods SILCs used and the ones they think are most effective reveals an interesting picture.

Input Method	# of SILCs Who Used It	# That Think Method Is Most Effective
Public Forums	46	24
Tele/video Conferences	8	3
Questionnaires	33	9
Interviews	13	4
Focus Groups	18	14
800 Numbers	16	5
Conferences	38	22
Needs Assessment	40	19
Demographic Data	30	2
Other	6	5

For more information about SILC Survey 2000

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NetNotes

■ Congratulations to ILRU Director Lex Frieden on his recent election as president of Rehabilitation International. The organization is a federation of national and international organizations and agencies working for the prevention of disability, the rehabilitation of people with disabilities and the equalization of opportunities within society on behalf of persons with disabilities and their families throughout the world. To learn more about Rehabilitation International check out its website: www.rehab-international.org/.

■ The IL Net Publications team is hard at work bringing a variety of new and useful publications to the independent living community. Keep an eye on your mail for four new issues of *Readings in Independent Living* scheduled for release in the near future. Each issue features a program that was selected as a winner in the Innovative CILs and SILCs competition:

A Commitment to Inclusion: Outreach to Unserved and Underserved Populations
Vision, Values and Vitality: Bringing Independent Living Principles to Mental Health Peer Support Living in the Community
Midtown Sweep: Grassroots Advocacy at Its Best

■ Meanwhile, make room on your bookshelves for an exciting new addition to the *ILRU Bookshelf Series*—a three part guide to legislative advocacy written by Bobby Silverstein, director of the Center for the Study and Advancement of Disability Policy. Silverstein is perhaps best known for his many years as a key Congressional staffer who played a critical role in the passage of important disability legislation. The title of the series is *A Congressional Insider's Guide to Influencing Disability Policy*. The three books are: *Effective Strategies for Interacting with Policy-Makers*, *General Guidelines for Disability Policy Change Agents* and *Developing Organized Coalitions and Strategic Plans*.

■ Finally, the very first book published in the *ILRU Bookshelf Series* continues in its popularity. *Freedom Of Movement: Independent Living History and Philosophy* by Steven. E. Brown of the Institute on Disability Culture is in its third printing. For more information about these or any ILRU publications contact Carri George, publications coordinator, at 713-520-0232 or cgeorge@bcm.tmc.edu.

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collaborative project between ILRU and the National Council on Independent Living to provide training and technical assistance to centers for independent living and statewide independent living councils nationwide. The Research and Training Center on Independent Living enhances the scope and quality of services provided by consumer-controlled, community-based centers for independent living.

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