IFSP State Council Meeting

September 25, 2026, 12 to 2:15 p.m.

Registration Link: https://events.gcc.teams.microsoft.com/event/06a7b7aa-20e5-46ed-b747-1f215e09725e@620ae5a9-4ec1-4fa0-8641-5d9f386c7309

Attendees: Heather Hines (DBHDS); Deanna Parker (DBHDS); Lynne Fetter (DBHDS); Rachel Vamenta (DBHDS); Andrea King (Valley Associates for Independent Living, Presenter); Rochelle Hopkins (Hamilton Relay Captioner); Ashley King (The Arc of Virginia); Lisa Richard (CFI Southwestern RNC); Cristen Martin, Nickie Brandenburger (CFI Northern RNCs); Donna Robel (CFI Eastern RNC); Sarah Bunger Horne (CFI Central RNC); Rebecca Stickler (CFI Western RNC); Monica Mann, Keisha Dortch, Kenneth Bouwens (Central Council); Margaret Lacson-Ecarma, Daniel Soya (Northern Council); Steve Grammer, LaSherron Diaz, Stacey Nichols (Southwestern Council); Mark Dixon, Crystal Ton, Gina Krause, Jason Krause (Eastern Council); Angela Hamilton (Western Council)

Hamilton Relay link: https://www.streamtext.net/player?event=HamiltonRelayRCC-0925-VA4528

I. Introductions and Agenda

A. Welcome, ground rules, and staff introductions
   1. The IFSP welcomed new partners attending a State Council meeting for the first time: Ashley King at The Arc of Virginia and Cristen Martin at The Center for Family Involvement. Cristen will be the new Regional Network Coordinator for the Northern Region.
   2. Icebreaker: What is your favorite meal to prepare for others?
B. Educational presentation 1: Andrea King, MSW (IFSP Western Regional Council), Valley Association for Independent Living (VAIL)
C. Regional work plan reports and business updates
D. Educational presentation 2: Deanna Parker, DBHDS
E. IFSP-Funding Program updates
F. Questions and discussion
G. Communications updates
H. Wrap-up and adjourn

II. Educational Presentation 1: Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

A. Andrea King, MSW is the Community Services Director at Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL). She also serves on the IFSP Western Regional Council.
B. Andrea spoke about the history, importance, and role of Centers for Independent Living (CILs).
C. Please see the attached PDF of Andrea's presentation following these minutes.
D. Contact information: To connect with VAIL, call 540-433-6513, email vail@govail.org, or visit govail.org. To connect with Andrea, call 540-433-6513, Ext. 106 or email andrea@govail.org.
E. Questions and comments: Please see Section VI of these meeting minutes.

III. Regional Workplan Reports and Business Updates

A. A representative from each Regional Council shared work plan progress and updates on regional work plan goals.

IV. Educational Presentation 2: CNS Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration

A. Deanna Parker, DBHDS Director of Community Network Supports (CNS), spoke about the CNS Office and its focused efforts to engage stakeholders in a shared values project.

V. IFSP-Funding Program updates: Led by the IFSP Program Manager

A. The IFSP-Funding Portal opens next Thursday, October 1 through Friday, October 30, 2026.
B. This year, the IFSP didn't change the application or guidelines. Feedback from partners, applicants, and call center operators lets us know this is is working for people.
C. The IFSP announced dates earlier in September 2026. The goal is to keep opening it sometime in the fall in October.
D. The IFSP held a training for Support Coordinators on September 23. There will be 2 more trainings the week of September 28, including a training for individuals and families. The dates and a recording from last year's training are on the My Life, My Community IFSP-Funding page.
E. The IFSP-Funding one-pager was updated after the June 2026 State Council meeting. Exact dates were removed so people can use the one-pager year after year.
F. The State Council can help by:
    1. Sharing with your networks,
    2. Encouraging people to apply,
    3. Directing people to the MLMC funding page, and
    4. Being a resource for questions and guidance.
G. IFSP Fiscal Year 2026 progress highlights were briefly shown, including funding distribution, Council representation and outreach, accessibility, and knowledge and awareness of the IFSP's key projects with partnerships.

VI. Questions and Discussion: Led by the IFSP Community Coordination Supervisor and IFSP Support Specialist

A. Rachel: Do CILS serve people with disabilities, even if it is not a developmental disability?
    1. Andrea: Yes. CILs serve anyone with a disability, regardless of when it was acquired.
B. The IFSP Support Specialist announced the IFSP plans to write a plain language version of the IFSP State and Regional Council Charters this year. What ideas do Council members have for creating those versions?
    1. Kenneth Bouwens suggested leveraging AI to create plain language summaries. Daniel Soya seconded that idea.
    2. Nickie Brandenburger will share plain language resources with the IFSP team after the meeting.
C. Mark Dixon expressed interest in the Quality Improvement Initiative on Assistive Technology.
    1. Deanna: The technology survey that went out last year received almost 300 responses. Currently, this initiative is in the community engagement phase.

The recommendations have been compiled.
2. Heather reminded everyone of the partnership with the Arc of Virginia on technology access. The information is available on The Arc of Virginia's 's website.

D. Margaret Lacson-Ecarma: Can people who apply for IFSP-Funding be reimbursed for costs incurred before being issued IFSP-Funding?
1. Heather: The funding needs to be spent on a cost that is incurred after you receive your approval email.

VII. Communications Updates: Led by the IFSP Communications and Program Coordinator

A. As of September 18, 2026, the mailer has gone out electronically and through postal mail to everyone on the Waitlist who has an email address or mailing address in WaMS. Materials in this mailer were discussed during the June 2026 State Council meeting and touched on here.
1. Council members on the Waitlist were encouraged to complete the IFSP's Annual Satisfaction Survey, share information about it on social media, and share it with other Waitlist individuals and families.
2. The *IFSP: First Steps* resource guide is now called *Developmental Disabilities (DD) First Steps*. The URL on My Life, My Community has been updated to reflect this change.

B. DBHDS recently updated its **branding guidelines**, including a new Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy regarding content creation. Council members can use AI to organize ideas for Regional Facebook posts, but they should write the posts themselves and fact check information. The IFSP also recommends Council members share information directly from DBHDS because this information is accurate.

C. As mentioned in the June 2026 State Council meeting, the IFSP is making small changes to the IFSP Digest to improve accessibility and readability. A button feature helps make important links more visible.

D. The IFSP Communications and Program Coordinator will attend Regional business meetings in October 2026.

E. Please feel free to share digest or Facebook suggestions with **IFSPCom@dbhds.virginia.gov**.

VIII. IFSP Council Updates: Led by the IFSP Community Coordination Supervisor

A. Language access beyond Spanish is an area of focus for 2027.

B. There are a few changes to State and Regional Council charters. Council members are encouraged to offer additional recommendations.

C. The current charters have a section that identifies quorums and voting. That is not needed, so that section will be removed. Minutes for State Council meetings are reviewed for accuracy before being issued, so voting is not necessary.

D. Provisional nominees will be added to definitions.

E. Each year, Council members review regional work plans, including goals, benchmarks, and activities that lead to success. That will be added to the charters.

F. 2027 recruitment has been successful, with great representation. Council members were thanked for their outreach efforts and participating in recruitment videos. Next year, the IFSP plans to make changes to improve efficiency during the application and interview process.
1. Orientation is scheduled for October 28, 2026. The IFSP will make official appointments in December.

IX. Wrap-Up and Adjourn

A. The IFSP's annual report for the 2026 Fiscal Year is under review and being finalized by DBHDS leadership. When complete, it will be posted on **My Life, My Community**.
B. Next Coordinated Regional Council Meeting: Thursday, October 15 from 6 to 8:15 p.m. The topic is "Key Resource Connections for people on Virginia's DD Waivers Waiting List."
C. Next meeting: All-Council Annual meeting is January 22, 2027 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
D. Meeting minutes will be distributed by email and posted to the My Life, My Community website at **https://mylifemycommunityvirginia.org/ifsp-state-council-minutes**. If Council members have any questions, they may email the IFSP at **IFSPCommunity@dbhds.virginia.gov**.
E. The IFSP Community Coordination Supervisor thanked everyone for a wonderful and engaging council year.

Centers for Independent Living (CILS)

Andrea King, MSW
Community Services Director
Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL)

9/25/26

What is a Center for Independent Living?



A CIL is a nonprofit organization designed and operated within the community by people with disabilities.

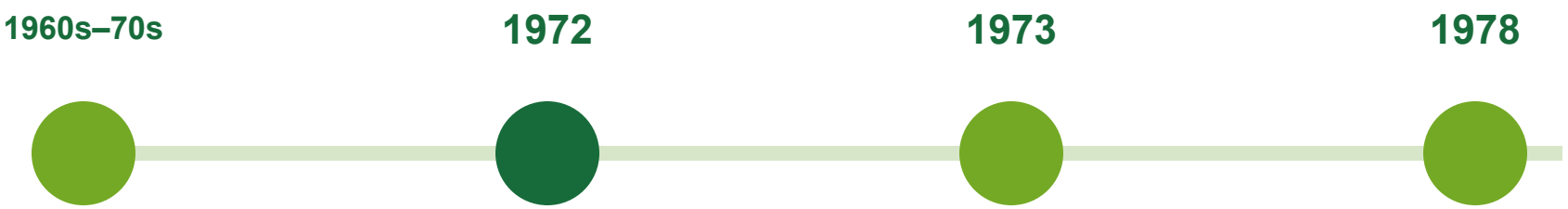
- Consumer controlled
- Community based and nonresidential
- Cross disability: serves people with many types of disabilities
- Focused on choice, independence, access, and full community participation

Federal law requires at least 51% of a CIL's board and staff to be people with disabilities.

Why Centers for Independent Living were created

HISTORY AND CIVIL RIGHTS

People with disabilities organized for the right to direct their own lives and participate in their communities.



Disability activists challenged institutionalization, segregation, and decisions made without them.

Disabled students and activists established the Berkeley Center for Independent Living.

The Rehabilitation Act strengthened federal disability rights and became the legal foundation for independent living services.

Rehabilitation Act amendments created federal funding for independent living programs and CILs.

The Independent Living Philosophy

Choice and self-direction

The individual identifies goals and decides which services and supports fit their life.

Peer leadership

People with disabilities share experience, practical knowledge, and strategies with one another.

Access and inclusion

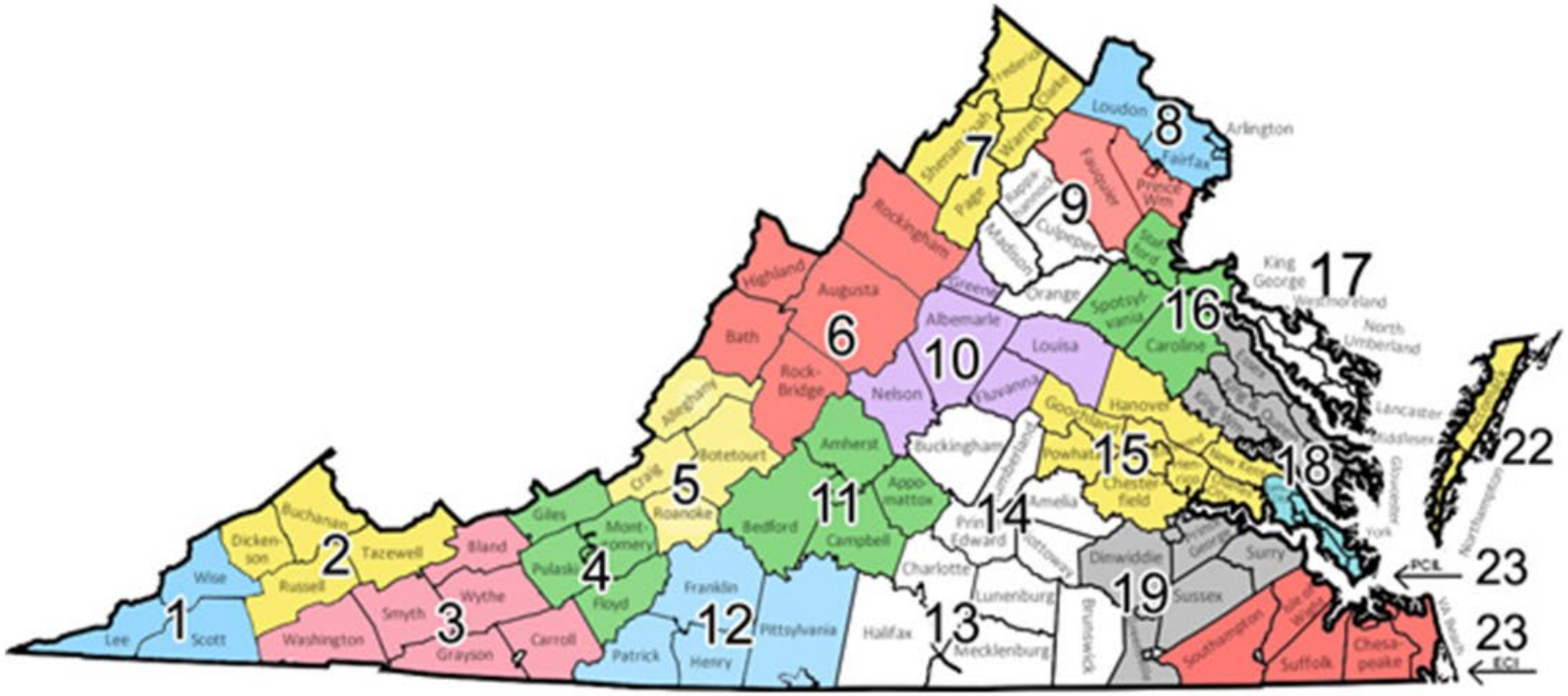
Communities remove physical, communication, policy, and attitudinal barriers.

Cross-disability community

CILs work with people of all ages and disability types rather than focusing on one diagnosis.

“NOTHING ABOUT US WITHOUT US.”

Statewide CIL coverage



https://vacil.org/cils-in-virginia/

Five required core services

1. Advocacy
2. Information and Referral
3. Peer Support
4. Independent Living Skills Training
5. Transition services

Every federally funded CIL provides all five.

Core services 1 and 2

1 Advocacy – individual & systems

Individual advocacy addresses a person's barrier or rights issue. Systems advocacy works to change policies, programs, and community conditions that affect many people.

2 Information and Referral

Connects people with accurate information about disability services, benefits, housing, transportation, assistive technology, and other community resources.

The individual sets the goal. The CIL provides information, teaching, and support.

Core services 3 and 4

3 Peer support

People with disabilities use shared experience to explore choices, solve problems, practice self-advocacy, and build confidence.

4 Independent Living Skills Training

Builds skills chosen by the individual, such as budgeting, meal preparation, transportation use, household management, communication, and self-advocacy.

Core service 5: Transition services

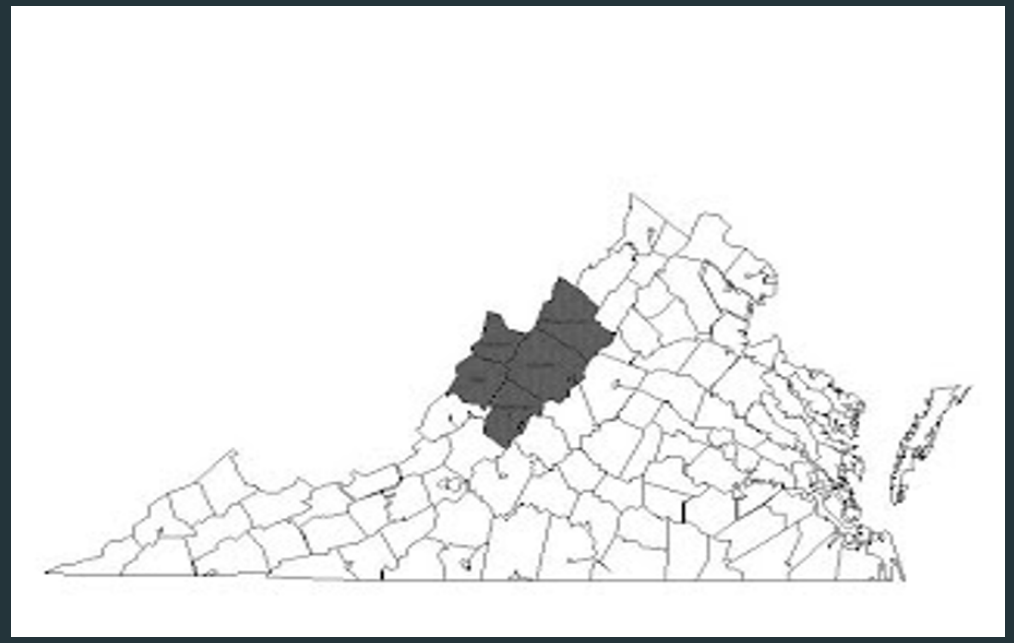
Moving to the community

Supports people with disabilities who are leaving nursing homes or other institutions for community-based living.

Youth transition

Helps eligible youth with disabilities move from secondary school to postsecondary life, work, and community participation.

VAIL



Valley Associates for Independent Living serves Planning District 6.

Counties

- Augusta
- Bath
- Highland
- Rockbridge
- Rockingham

Cities

- Buena Vista
- Harrisonburg
- Lexington
- Staunton
- Waynesboro

Mission: Promote self-direction among people with disabilities and remove barriers to independence in the community.

What Else Can CILs Do?

- What each CIL offers outside of the 5 core services looks very different.
- For example, at VAIL we offer services such as:
  - Private case management for FIS waiver
  - Service facilitation for CCC+ & DD waivers
  - Technical assistance
  - Options counseling – collab with VPAS
  - Assistance with home modifications
  - Assistance with IEP process
  - Wheelchair basketball team – Go VAIL Harrisonburg Cardinals!
  - Outdoor adaptive recreation program
  - Project ACCESS grant – collaboration with DARS



Connect with VAIL

3210 Peoples Drive, Suite 220
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Phone: (540) 433-6513
Email: vail@govail.org
Website: govail.org

Connect with Me

Andrea King
Phone: (540) 433-6513, ext. 105
Email: andrea@govail.org