



MY-CIL Practice Brief #4

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Working with out-of-school youth from minority backgrounds: What CILs offer and what they value

In this brief. Youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 with disabilities, particularly those who are neither in school nor working, are an increasingly important population for Centers for Independent Living (CILs) to engage. In this brief, we describe services CILs have provided to out-of-school youth (OSY) from minority backgrounds, and the extent to which CILs believe specific services are critical to successful independent living.

We used data from 218 CILs that completed a survey focused on services for OSY. The survey collected information on the characteristics of OSY served by CILs, the breadth of services provided, services CILs deem most effective, and challenges CILs face in increasing and improving services for these youth.

About the MY-CIL project. Minority Youth and Centers for Independent Living (MY-CIL) is a collaborative effort of Hunter College; the Center for Independence of the Disabled, New York; Independent Living Research Utilization; and Mathematica. The National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research and the Office of Independent Living Programs at the Administration for Community Living funded MY-CIL to improve outcomes for youth and young adults with disabilities from minority backgrounds who have completed or otherwise left secondary education. MY-CIL seeks to produce and share knowledge that empowers CILs to improve outcomes for OSY from minority backgrounds.

Clarifying terms

Youth from minority backgrounds. MY-CIL uses the term youth from minority backgrounds to refer to transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14 to 24) from nationally recognized racial and ethnic minority groups.

Out-of-school youth (OSY) with disabilities. MY-CIL uses the term OSY to refer to transition-age youth and young adults (ages 14 to 24) who have completed or otherwise left secondary education.

What types of services have CILs provided to OSY from minority backgrounds?

Historically, CILs have provided core services—such as peer support, information and referral, advocacy, and training in independent living skills—to both youth and adults. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 now requires CILs to actively offer services to youth who are in and out of secondary school and who are transitioning to postsecondary life, regardless of whether the youth successfully completed their schooling.

The MY-CIL survey questions covered broad service categories (such as services related to independent living, employment, education, counseling, and social services), which included the core services. A large majority of CILs (90 percent or more) offered independent living, employment-related, counseling, and social services to OSY from minority backgrounds (Table 1). Less than 80 percent of CILs offered education-related services to this consumer group, which was the least frequent service.

Table 1. Providing CIL services to OSY from minority backgrounds, by type of service

| Types of services provided | Percentage of CILs |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Independent living services | 95.9 |
| Social services | 93.6 |
| Employment-related services | 92.2 |
| Counseling services | 89.9 |
| Education-related services | 78.9 |

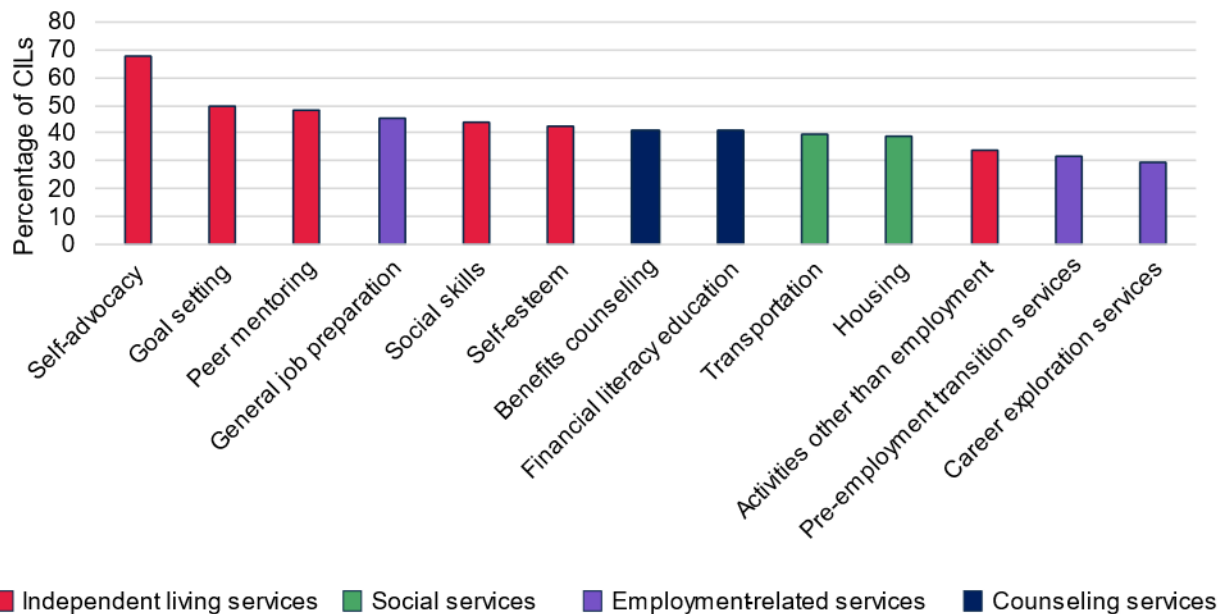
What services are critical to independent living success for OSY from minority backgrounds?

Across these five categories of services, CILs reported whether they provided many specific types of services to OSY from minority backgrounds and, for the services they provided, if they believed each was critical to successful independent living. Figure 1 displays the 13 services at least 30 percent of providing CILs believed were critical for successful independent living.

Nearly half of these 13 most critical services were specific independent living services, including five of the top six. CILs considered assistance in developing self-advocacy skills critical for successful independent living most frequently, with 68 percent of CILs that provided it reporting it as critical. Peer mentoring and assistance with setting goals, social skills, and self-esteem were the other independent living services frequently mentioned as critical.

CILs cited fewer specific social, employment, counseling, and education-related services as critical for successful independent living. Among social services, transportation and housing services were reported as critical by the highest share of CILs that provided the service to OSY from minority backgrounds (roughly 40 percent). Among employment-related services, almost half of CILs that provided general job preparation services deemed them critical for independent living, followed by about one-third of CILs for pre-employment transition and career exploration services. Benefits counseling and financial literacy education were the counseling services most frequently reported as critical. Less than 30 percent of the CILs that provided education-related services deemed them as critical for successful independent living.

Figure 1. Services most frequently deemed critical for independent living success, among CILs that provided the service



Discussion

The vast majority of CILs reported offering a range of services to OSY from minority backgrounds. That the largest share of CILs provided independent living and social services is consistent with their historic mission to offer core independent living services. A slightly lower share provided employment- and education-related services, which are newer services for many CILs since the WIOA, which other community organizations, such as vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, continue to offer.

The greater emphasis of independent living services over employment- or education-related services as critical might also reflect the person-centered philosophy behind CILs. Self-advocacy, self-esteem, and goal setting can be universally beneficial, whereas the need or importance of individual employment- or education-related services can vary by different consumers' independent living goals and are strengths of community partners such as VR and workforce agencies to which CILs make referrals. In addition, these skills might be fundamental strengths without which individuals cannot identify or best pursue their education and employment goals.

In coming years, CILs could find greater demand or need for their services from OSY youth, including those from minority backgrounds. Due to pandemic-related school closures and staffing challenges, many schools could not provide the special education and transition services they would normally have offered to students with disabilities. Schools in high-poverty areas especially experienced greater difficulty providing services than before the pandemic (Belsha 2021). Although schools filled some of these gaps as they reopened for in-person instruction, many students disappeared and did not return. Many other students aged out during this period and were no longer eligible to attend school and receive school-based transition services (Morando-Rhim and Ekin 2021). These gaps—combined with a growing mental health

crisis among youth and young adults, particularly among vulnerable populations (Murthy 2021)—point to a growing need for CILs to continue and expand their charge to serve OSY from minority backgrounds. CILs not offering these services might consider how to connect youth from minority backgrounds to those services, either directly or through building relationships and referring them to other community organizations.

MY-CIL training and technical assistance to increase and improve services to OSY

MY-CIL offers CILs support to increase and improve services to OSY from minority backgrounds through a series of learning collaboratives and one-on-one support to develop and test pilot programs.

Learning collaboratives. The MY-CIL Learning Collaborative involves much more than training. During the second Learning Collaborative, convened from April to November 2021, facilitators worked with a dedicated group of six CILs to support one another as they planned to create or expand programs and services for youth and young adults with disabilities who are out of postsecondary school, with an emphasis on racial and ethnic minority groups. The first Learning Collaborative met from August 2020 to March 2021. During each collaborative, participants have access to several features:

- Leaders who are well-versed in working with youth with disabilities who are out of postsecondary school and from racial and ethnic minority groups
- Opportunities to learn, share promising practices, and brainstorm solutions to challenges with CIL peers
- Monthly meetings and additional workshops and coaching sessions
- Resources to help with goal setting and organizational planning

Stay tuned for the next practice briefs

Upcoming practice briefs will include case studies of individual CIL innovations for improving outcomes for OSY from minority backgrounds and barriers CILs have identified to serving them. MY-CIL will also share data briefs customized to each CIL on the characteristics of OSY in the counties they serve.

To learn about participating in the next learning collaborative, contact Joey Vega at Jose.Vega@memorialhermann.org or 832-454-1057.

Customized development of pilot programs. MY-CIL also offers more intensive, one-on-one support. MY-CIL advisors facilitate activities to help CIL staff build capacity and develop pilot strategies to increase and improve services for OSY with disabilities from minority backgrounds. Collaboratively with staff, we identify problems, analyze root causes, develop strategies, and road test potential interventions. In the months ahead, MY-CIL will continue with one-on-one learning to assist CILs in assessing the feasibility and benefit of new pilot interventions. If your CIL is interested in participating in future pilot program activities, contact Frank Martin at fmartin@mathematica-mpr.com or (202) 484-4684.

To learn more about MY-CIL

To learn more about MY-CIL, please visit: <https://minorityyouthcil.com/>.

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