

Monthly tips and resources featured in **What's Next?** are created for young adults, their families, and supporters who are exploring options for life after high school in Indiana.

Centers for Independent Living

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Imagine it is 1962 and you're going to college. You've selected UC Berkeley, and you're the first person with a significant disability to enroll there.

This was the situation of [Ed Roberts](#), the father of the Independent Living Movement. Paralyzed from the neck down due to polio as a teenager, Roberts used an electric wheelchair and spent part of his time in an iron lung. Very little was accessible in the 1960s, so the only place he could live was Cowell Hospital on campus. Other students with significant impacts of disability soon joined him at Cowell and this group became known as "the Rolling Quads."

PDSP gains ground at Berkeley

Ed Roberts and the Rolling Quads eventually founded the Physically Disabled Students Program (PDSP) at Berkeley. They provided personal assistance services, wheelchair repairs, emergency attendant care, help in obtaining financial services, and more. The PDSP believed strongly that people with disabilities are the disability experts and an overall holistic approach for helping people was better than going to numerous agencies for help.

As the PDSP gained popularity, individuals with disabilities from the public began applying for services. In 1972, Roberts and the Rolling Quads established the first Center for Independent Living in Berkeley, California, with a one-year \$50,000 grant from the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 followed the PDSP's lead and established a study to determine the need for Independent Living Centers nation-wide. As a result, Congress enacted Title VII, creating the [Independent Living Services and Centers for Independent Living programs](#).

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Today there are over 300 [CILs across the United States](#). In Indiana, CILs are operated under the [Family and Social Services Administration](#) (although each center is its own not-for-profit organization with various funding sources).

Centers for Independent Living are consumer-controlled, meaning that people with disabilities manage them. They are cross-disability, serving people with all types of disabilities. They are nonresidential, but they can help locate housing. They promote the independent living philosophy of empowering all people with disabilities to live in and experience full inclusion in their community.

Each center is unique but operates under the same core services, including peer counseling, information and referral, advocacy, and independent living skills training. In particular, they offer services that help people transition out of nursing homes into the community and youth transition into postsecondary life.

CILs are a great resource if you need help living more independently but don't know where to start. Most people working at CILs have disabilities themselves and have first-hand experience and can help you navigate the world of disability services toward a life of independent living.

Check out this [CIL by County listing](#) to find one near you!

Resources

- [FSSA Centers for Independent Living website](#)
- [Indiana Centers for Independent Living article by IRCA](#)
- [The History of the Berkeley Center for Independent Living](#)
- ["About Ed" From Ed Roberts Day 2018](#)

What's Next? is a project of the Center on Community Living and Careers and the Indiana Department of Education.

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