



CT State Independent Living Council (CT SILC) Annual Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

1:00 PM

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Carmen Correa-Rios, Melissa Cullen-Carter, Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Corey Lee, Rich Luby, George Michna*, Jaclyn Pinney, Kim Smith, Emily Zambrello

Board Members Absent: Mark Linabury, Melissa Thompson, Darrell Ruopp

***Denotes non-voting member.**

Staff: Molly Cole, SILC Executive Director; Michele DuBois, Data Coordinator/Office Administrator

Guests: Sharon Heddle, Executive Director - Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC); Eileen Healy, Executive Director - Independence Northwest (IN); Senator Matthew Lesser; Representative Jillian Gilchrest; Melissa Marshall, JD., Director of Policy & Programs - The Partnership for Inclusive Disaster Strategies; Walter Glomb, Executive Director - Council on Developmental Disabilities; Mary Beth Bruder, PhD., Director and Professor - University of Connecticut Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD); Christi Lee; Peggy Johnson

ACTION	AGENDA ITEM
Call to Order	The meeting was called to Order at 1:05 pm - Quorum established.
Welcome and Introductions	Gretchen Knauff welcomed attendees to our annual meeting and offered opening remarks that included the importance of continuing our new tradition of giving advocacy awards to recognize those who really have been champions of the disability community. She also introduced Mary Beth Bruder, who generously hosted the annual meeting and spoke, before beginning the agenda.
Advocacy Awards:	<p>Legislative Advocacy Award: Presented to legislators who have supported legislative efforts to promote independent living and address disability issues in our state. This year’s award was presented to two recipients:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senator Matthew Lesser • Representative Jillian Gilchrest <p>Daria Smith Advocacy Award: Daria Smith served as the Executive Director of the CT State Independent Living Council from 2009 until her untimely death in 2021. This award was established in her memory to recognize an individual who has advocated to promote the independent living philosophy in CT. This year’s recipient is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Melissa Marshall, JD
Good News	<p>Emily Zambrello, Farrah Garland, Michele DuBois, Michelle Johnson, and Gretchen Knauff shared positive news with the rest of the board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emily shared that a school referendum she worked on for two years passed and with additional advocating on an insurance issue, policy and procedure updates were promised so the same situation would not happen to others.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michele shared news that she presented for the II/T&TA Independent Living Training and Technical Center, SILC Connection – Telling Your Story: Measuring Your Impact Through Data, along with Molly Cole, despite her extreme anxiety. • Farrah shared that she decided to run for the Board of Ed in her town, getting involved in REV UP and continuing the push for equity access and care for all. • Michelle and Gretchen had a table at the Camp Harkness Fall Fest for CT SILC and REV UP and registered as a 42-year-old gentleman. His mom had been trying to get him to register since he was sixteen. They also met Rep. Nick Gauthier who asked for more information and would potentially support SDM legislation.
Public Comment	There was no public comment.
Minutes from August 20, 2025	<p>Motion to accept the minutes by Kim Smith. Farrah Garland seconded.</p> <p>ACTION: The minutes were approved. Carmen Correa-Rios, Kim Smith, Emily Zambrello abstained.</p>
Treasurer’s Report: Financial Report; Review Discussion and Approval of Budget	<p>Gretchen Knauff presented the Financial Report Summary for the period ending August 31, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT SILC’s financial position at the end of August 2025 remains strong. • The bank account has been reconciled through August 31, 2025, without any issues. • Waiting for fourth quarter payment from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS), that was billed in July. <p>No formal vote required for the Treasurer’s Report.</p> <p>Review, Discussion, and Approval of Budget</p> <p>The board had a detailed discussion on the proposed budget. It included discussion on federal budget unknowns, CT SILC reserves, the CILs and Area Agencies of Aging collaboration project (including CT SILC support), possible types of SPIL amendments and what they entail, the possibility of sharing some costs with collaborators (example: interpreters), etc.</p> <p>ACTION: A Motion was made by Michelle Johnson and seconded by Jaclyn Pinney in favor of a contingency budget depending on the federal government budget and negotiation of the CILs/Area Agencies of Aging project.</p> <p>ACTION: Motion carried.</p>
Recommendation from the Executive Committee on Membership of the Recruitment Committee	<p>The Executive Committee met to discuss reconvening the Recruitment Committee. It has been on hold as we wait on status of federal funding. It was agreed to reconvene the committee with the hope that the CT SILC will be able to continue its work.</p> <p>After an in depth and thoughtful discussion about the nature of the work, board composition and needs, personal and confidentiality requirements, CT SILC board members already being subject to confidentiality and ethics agreements, pushback from those outside the organization on signing agreements, the experience and reach of outside members, past perceptions, and the different</p>



	<p>options explored, it was agreed that the best solution would be to have the recruitment committee only consist of CT SILC board members.</p> <p>ACTION: A motion was made by Rich Luby to have the Board Recruitment Committee only be made up of CT SILC board members. Farrah Garland seconded.</p> <p>ACTION: Motion carried unanimously.</p>
<p>Executive Director’s Report</p>	<p>Molly Cole gave the Executive Director’s report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract and Reports: Waiting for fourth quarter payment from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) that was billed in July. Signed a contract amendment from ADS for the fiscal year beginning October 1. • Projects: The CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance (CCDLA) began meeting twice monthly on September 12th. The next meeting will be September 26th from 12 - 1 PM. A calendar of meeting dates was sent out. • Supported Decision Making (SDM): The SDM Policy Group meets every Friday and continues to work on a legislative strategy for the next session. The group continues to work on the SDM toolkit and website. They are also planning a second legislative informational hearing at the LOB on November 13th, Room 2C, 10 to 11.30 AM, and will be hybrid. We are encouraging people to come in person for a good show of support and to invite others. Jonathan Martinis is going to be there in person to speak and meet with legislators. • REV UP: Began voter registration education and outreach during Disability Voting Rights week. • Aging and Disability: Continuing to participate in aging and disability initiatives with both the Community of Practice and the Age Well Collaborative. We are on the planning committee for the Aging and Disability Summit. The Aging and Disability Summit will take place on October 6, 2025, at the Aqua Turf. Alison Barkoff will be the recipient of the Judith Stein award this year. • Webinars and Training: We are planning a statewide CIL staff training next Wednesday, September 23rd, on Emergency Preparedness Shelter training. The training will be provided by the Red Cross at the Red Cross office in Uncasville. Planning another round of SDM webinars to educate and expand our outreach as we have realized many groups still do not understand SDM. • Outreach: The CT SILC attended the following events and disseminated information on CT SILC, Centers for Independent Living (CILs), CCDLA, SDM and REV UP. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Attended Spinal Cord Injury event. Set up two tables. One table had



	<p>REV UP materials and the other CT SILC, CILs, CCDLA, SDM. The audience was primarily students from Quinnipiac.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Shared REV UP materials with Disability Rights CT (DRCT) and they have been actively doing outreach. Last Thursday they had an event in Bridgeport. ○ Gretchen and Michelle Johnson shared CT SILC, CILs, CCDLA, SDM and REV UP materials at the Camp Harkness Fall Festival. ○ We have other opportunities coming up and are sharing materials and a table with the CILs at the Aging and Disability Summit.
<p>Review of the year's activities: CIL Directors</p>	<p>Before the CIL Directors reviewed the year's activities, George Michna, PhD, (Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability Services) thanked the executive directors of the Centers for Independent Living for their collaboration on the federally funded Bridge Project, which supports students with disabilities in achieving competitive, integrated employment. He noted that the Centers are developing modules on self-advocacy, peer mentoring, financial literacy, and career readiness, and commended their strong performance and positive impact.</p> <p>Independence Unlimited (IU) – Jaclyn Pinney An overview was given of new and current staff and their roles. They have a new Veteran service coordinator. Highlights were given on partnerships (BESB, UCONN School of Social Work and the City of Hartford), the Visitability Design contest, a Habitat for Humanity grant received, group start-ups (including men, women, parenting, sports working out, watching games and a breakfast club) and identifying Enfield and Tolland as the State plan update for Urban and Rural areas to target. They also collaborate with Community Cares on a bunch of different events. They are continuing with Emergency Prep.</p> <p>Independence Northwest (IN) – Eileen Healey IN gave direct services to 275 people in the past year. These do not include information and referrals or community events. Noted that 52% of those individuals were over age 60. Also noted was that 35% of people they serve have multiple disabilities. It was noted that the Data team helped produce a way to track that data more clearly and that number was a bit surprising. Highlighted items were the Bridges project and the collaboration on modules educating about disability awareness. She noted how they are very embedded in the independent living philosophy. Talked about the Centers' unique projects and funding sources including the HOPWA program and their veterans' programs that are growing (including support groups in various areas) and has funding from the Area Agencies on Aging (AAA).</p> <p>Center for Disability Rights (CDR) - Carmen Correa-Rios This year the Center served 554 consumers (126 new). Of that number 57-61 received Part B funds, seventy-nine received CSA services, consumers were assessed for durable medical equipment, needed benefits and other core services. There were forty-eight new transitions, with three new consumers moving out of a nursing home with just core and CSA services. The center collaborates with the Rotary Club in West Haven and helped them with their</p>



	<p>vocation and career program. CDR reached out to 150 students from West Haven High School, Notre Dame, etc. and worked on setting up job shadowing. CDR is part of the Bridges Project and Aging and Disability Summit planning committee. Announcement regarding CDR’s Annual meeting being held tomorrow with a celebration of the ADA. On October 25th there will be a gathering at the East Haven Green with lots of activities.</p> <p>Disabilities Network of Eastern Connecticut (DNEC) - Sharon Heddle DNEC has 225 active consumers who received 417 services through the year and accomplished 150 goals. They also received 393 phone calls or emails for information and referral services. DNEC is good at of how they find other sources of income for goods and services for their consumers. They took \$17,000 in part B funds, combined it with other grants and were able to purchase \$72,000 worth of food and services to support independent living. Some things they were able to assist with were seven ramps, three-bathroom remodels, a stair lift, eight air conditioners for people with COPD or other breathing difficulties. One consumer received a bed and does not have to sleep on the floor anymore. They also supplied someone with a lift chair, a rollator, hearing aids, sip-and-puff devices, technology such as laptops or an iPad for access and communication services. They were able to help with car repairs, rental assistance, utility bills, and grocery gift cards. Sharon then told a story to highlight one of their consumers because as she said, it is not always what you can buy them but what you can teach them to live more independently.</p> <p>Access Independence (AI) - Melissa Cullen-Carter The center expressed an interest in highlighting its unique service. Melissa talked about Access 3D to help people familiarize the opportunities the center can provide. Access 3D can do customization, scanning and 3D printing. She shared a story about a consumer in a wheelchair who relies on talking with use of her iPad but struggled to communicate because it was not close enough to her mouth and was not able to find a solution. Access 3D was able to scan and print a custom arm that held the iPad and removed that barrier. She noted that the center wants to do more outreach on that with a focus on assistive technology. The Center is working on the Bridge project, doing a lot more transitions, and offers benefits counseling through CHOICES and MIPPA.</p>
<p>Committee Reports</p>	<p>DATA TECH COMMITTEE – Eileen Healey No Report.</p> <p>EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS – Kim Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Prep training for CIL staff will be held next week. <p>SPIL COMMITTEE – Chris Blake No Report</p>
<p>Announcements and Upcoming Events</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aging and Disability Summit, October 6, 2025, at the Aqua Turf. • DNEC hosting a Trivia Night Fundraiser, October 4, 2025, at 6:30 PM (doors open at 5:30 PM), Moose Lodge, 115 Fitchville Rd., Bozrah, CT.
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn by Kim Smith; second by Farrah Garland. Adopted unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM</p>