



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

Wednesday, November 19, 2025

3:00 PM

Board Members Present: Gretchen Knauff, Chris Blake, Melissa Cullen-Carter, Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Corey Lee, Mark Linabury, Jaclyn Pinney, Darrell Ruopp, Joe Shortt, Kim Smith, Melissa Thompson-Dooley, Emily Zambrello

Board Members Absent: Rich Luby, George Michna*, Carmen Correa-Rios

***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)

ACTION	AGENDA ITEM
Call to Order	The meeting was called to Order at 3:07 pm - Quorum established.
Welcome and Introductions	Gretchen Knauff welcomed attendees and offered opening remarks before beginning the agenda.
Good News	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gretchen shared that the Supported Decision Making (SDM) Informational Forum was reported as very successful. • Chris Blake presented at the SDM Informational Forum. • Emily announced her recent marriage and reported that the event went well and had perfect weather. • Kim shared she successfully assembled and began using a new long-arm quilting machine and long-armed her first entire quilt. • Melissa Thompson-Dooley reported that the Federation of the Blind conference was very successful and thanked Molly and Gretchen for their support. • Molly and Gretchen shared how great it was to see some Partners graduates at the conference that they had not seen in a while.
Public Comment	There was no public comment.
Minutes from October 15, 2025	<p>Motion to accept the minutes by Michelle Johnson. Melissa Thompson seconded.</p> <p>ACTION: The minutes were approved. Farrah Garland, Michelle Johnson, Mark Linabury, Emily Zambrello abstained.</p>
Treasurer's Report	<p>Mark Linabury presented the Financial Report Summary for the period ending October 31, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CT SILC's financial position at the end of October 2025 remains strong, with a reported net income of approximately \$61,000. • The bank account has been reconciled through October 31, 2025, without issues. • CT SILC is awaiting payment from ADS, which has experienced technical delays. Receipt of these funds are anticipated. • The fund balance remains intact at approximately \$433,000, consistent with prior



	<p>years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation was expressed to the CILs, noting that all Part B case service funds were fully expended by year-end. • Given ongoing uncertainties in federal funding and the current economic conditions, the Board and staff remain cautious about spending. <p>No formal vote required for the Treasurer’s Report.</p>
<p>Executive Director’s Report and Federal Funding updates:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operations: CT SILC is awaiting payment from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) for the current quarter. Reassurances have been received that payment will occur; however, the agency has experienced ongoing uncertainties. As a result, spending continues to be approached cautiously. • Projects: The CT Cross Disability Lifespan Alliance (CCDLA) meetings are held every two weeks through the end of December. Beginning in January, meetings will be held weekly. Major focus areas identified include healthcare, supported decision making, housing, and food insecurity. In January, the coalition will begin developing a legislative agenda. In March, work will begin on developing questions for the Candidates Forum, which is scheduled for October 7, 2026, at the Bristol Event Center. • Emergency Preparedness: The committee is considering two trainings. One for the CILs with the Red Cross and another for the Red Cross to help fill the gaps identified in our last training regarding accommodations for people with disabilities in an emergency. • Supported Decision Making (SDM): SDM efforts are currently focused on legislative strategy. The SDM informational forum was well attended, with a total of 134 participants, including 55 attending virtually and 79 attending in person. The forum was reported as being well received by legislators. Next steps include finalizing legislative language and introducing a SDM bill during the 2026 legislative session. For those unable to attend, the CT-N recording of the SDM forum is available here: https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=25579. • Aging and Disability: Attended the debriefing session of the Aging and Disability Summit. The 2026 Aging and Disability Summit will take place on October 6, 2026, at the Aqua Turf. • Outreach: Multiple events were attended as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Molly and Gretchen attended a Rock the Vote event at MidState Arc, primarily serving individuals with intellectual disabilities living in group home settings. The Secretary of State was also in attendance. An accessible ballot marking device, voter registration materials, and informational resources were shared. It was observed that some individuals and support staff believed voting eligibility was impacted by disability or guardianship status, despite individuals demonstrating the ability to make informed choices and successfully use the voting device. Discussions with event organizers identified a need for additional training, as voting rights may only be restricted by a probate court determination, which is rare. ○ Molly and Gretchen attended the Federation of the Blind Convention in Rocky Hill on November 7 and 8, which included a table exhibit and a presentation on CT SILC activities.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Molly participated in a panel discussion with medical students at Quinnipiac University focused on the role of health professionals in advocacy. Several attendees later attended the SDM informational forum. ○ Presentations on SDM were delivered to the IDD Division of the Nonprofit Alliance and to ARC directors. ● Southbury Coalition: The Coalition reconvened to discuss strategies to support the closure of Southbury Training School, which is the only large state-operated institutional residential facility of its kind remaining in Connecticut. It was noted that the facility remains operational with approximately 90 individuals currently residing there, at an estimated cost of approximately \$800,000 per person yearly. ● Federal Funding Update: According to the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), Congress passed a continuing resolution temporarily funding federal agencies through January 30, 2026. The legislative branch, Veterans Affairs, and the Department of Agriculture (including SNAP and WIC) are funded through the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30, 2026), even in the event of another government shutdown. However, Part B funding for FY2026 has only been appropriated through the end of January. If another shutdown occurs, additional funding disruptions may occur. Part C grant awards are secured.
<p>Committee Reports:</p>	<p>DATA TECH COMMITTEE – Michele DuBois</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Data Committee continues to meet regularly and will convene again to further its work. ● Recent discussions highlighted the need to pause and reassess current approaches to ensure alignment on shared goals. ● The Committee agreed to take a step back to revisit objectives, clarify priorities, and confirm consensus on desired outcomes. ● Future meetings will include discussion of potential training options, evaluation criteria, and next steps. <p>EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS – Kim Smith</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Emergency Preparedness Committee did not meet in October. Meetings are scheduled to resume, with the next meeting planned for November 20, 2025. ● Discussions will include potential trainings in collaboration with the Red Cross. ● Proposed training topics include emergency preparedness for CILs, disability-related accommodations during emergencies, and potential training for emergency responders. ● Training efforts are also aimed at addressing gaps identified in prior training with the Red Cross. <p>SPIL COMMITTEE – Chris Blake</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The SPIL Committee meeting was postponed and is being rescheduled. ● Updates will be available at the next Board meeting. <p>A discussion was held regarding reconvening the Board Recruitment Committee and the need to add additional members. It was noted that Rich Luby is currently serving as Chair of the Recruitment Committee. The Board previously voted that Recruitment Committee members must be current CT SILC members. Currently, the committee consists of Rich Luby, Chris Blake and Michelle Johnson. Darrell Ruopp, Corey Lee,</p>



	<p>Joe Shortt and Melissa Thompson-Dooley volunteered to join the Recruitment Committee. An updated list will be sent to Rich Luby to schedule the meeting.</p>
<p>Reports from Smaller Breakout Groups on CT SILC Initiatives (Continuation from last Board meeting)</p>	<p>The Board members were each assigned a group to discuss the ways board members can support and assist in implementing each initiative.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1 - Supported Decision Making: Gretchen, Jaclyn, Sharon, Emily • Group 2 - Emergency Preparedness: Kim, Melissa Cullen-Carter • Group 3 - Candidates Forum: Darrell, Corey, Molly, Farrah, Mark, Michelle Johnson • Group 4 - Civic Engagement: Chris, Joe, Melissa Thompson, Michele DuBois <p>Reports from groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1: The SDM group reflected on the recent SDM informational forum and noted that the progression from foundational information to practical application helped clarify the role of SDM. The group discussed legislative outreach and identified the need to develop a clear SDM “elevator speech” to support advocacy efforts. Members discussed the possibility of a follow-up training in January and a process for submitting key points to inform the development of a shared elevator speech. Strategies for using the elevator speech in legislative outreach were also discussed. • Group 2: The Emergency Preparedness group discussed the importance of educating board members on emergency preparedness and reviewed existing forms and materials. The group plans to compile these resources into a digital file and distribute them for review, with members providing feedback on clarity, length, and usability. This feedback will be used to determine how the materials may be refined and used moving forward. • Group 3: The Candidates Forum group reflected on lessons learned from the prior year’s forum, including the balance between in-person and virtual participation. The group discussed the importance of increasing in-person attendance while maintaining remote access and reviewed considerations related to moderation, outreach, and accessibility. Members discussed strategies to broaden participation, including engaging younger audiences and diverse communities, and noted the need for flexibility in question development and planning as the event approaches. • Group 4: The Civic Engagement breakout group discussed ways to increase public understanding of CT SILC’s role and expand outreach beyond existing networks. Ideas included developing a short introductory video or shared outreach materials to explain CT SILC’s work and its relationship with the Centers for Independent Living. Members also discussed partnership opportunities with colleges and community organizations, including a potential collaboration with Hartford Athletics related to disability awareness and community engagement.
<p>Announcements</p>	<p>Jaclyn Pinney reported that a fundraiser will be held at Red Robin on November 20, 2025, with 20% of food sales benefiting Independence Unlimited. A flyer was shared for distribution.</p>
<p>Adjourn</p>	<p>Motion to adjourn by Kim Smith; second by Michelle Johnson. Adopted unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 4:40 PM</p>