

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Between

**United States Department of Veterans Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and
Employment Service**

National Council on Independent Living

Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living

America's service-members, Guard and Reserve members, all stand vigilant and prepared to place themselves in harm's way to protect our Nation. The fruits of their commitment and courage are found in the rights and freedoms Americans have enjoyed for 228 years. Such selfless service and sacrifice earn our Nation's defenders the honored title "Veteran."

We recognize that America's veterans bring to our Nation's workforce a rich resource of diverse and talented workers. They are as eager and capable of contributing to our Nation's prosperity as civilians during peace as they were to our Nation's security during war.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Service, the National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) are mutually committed to ensuring these brave men and women are able, to the maximum extent possible, to live independently and participate in family and community life, to increase their potential to return to work, and to have access to both challenging and rewarding employment opportunities. This is in keeping with President Abraham Lincoln's 1865 promise "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan."

The Department of Veterans Affairs' VR&E program helps veterans with service-connected disabilities achieve maximum independence in daily living, become employable, and obtain and maintain suitable employment.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' VR&E program, based in Washington, DC, is the longest-running national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. Founded in 1982, NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), individuals with disabilities, and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States.

The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is also a national grass roots, consumer controlled, nonprofit membership organization consisting of centers for independent living, their satellites and branch offices, statewide independent

living councils, other organizations and individuals concerned with the independent living issues of people with disabilities living in rural America. APRIL has membership in 42 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico.

The Department of Veterans Affairs' VR&E Service, the National Council on Independent Living, and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living wish to afford Veterans with service-connected disabilities opportunities to live independently, seek employment, career advancement, job mobility, family economic well being, and greater financial security with this mutually beneficial agreement.

THEREFORE, the Department of Veterans Affairs' VR&E Service, the National Council on Independent Living, and the Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living agree to:

- Create greater awareness among Veterans about resources for service-disabled Veterans related to community-based center for independent living-related resources for Veterans with service-connected disabilities;
- Develop training materials to ensure that staff in both VA regional offices and Centers for Independent Living, their Associations, and Statewide Independent Living Councils are fully aware of the services and benefits that each may provide;
- Discuss and encourage possible partnership between local Centers for Independent Living, their Associations, and Statewide Independent Living Councils and VA offices;
- Share our Mutual cooperation throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs, VR&E Service and Centers for Independent Living their Associations, and Statewide Independent Living Councils;
- Promote and assist state-level collaboration efforts and collaboration of services between State Centers for Independent Living Associations and / or Statewide Independent Living Councils, and local VR&E offices;
- Promote and assist local collaboration efforts and coordination of services between Centers for Independent Living and local VR&E offices for Veterans with service-connected disabilities, and;
- Collect and analyze data annually to be used for future planning purposes.

This agreement does not in itself authorize the expenditure or reimbursement of any funds. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate to expend appropriations or other monies, or enter into any contract or other obligation.

This agreement shall not be interpreted to limit, supersede, or otherwise affect either party's normal operations or decisions in carrying out its mission, or its statutory or regulatory duties.

Dated February 24, 2011

Signed by:

R.A. Fanning

Director, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, Department of Veterans Affairs

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Supplemental Documents

How Centers for Independent Living (CILs) Can Assist VR&E and Veterans

Background

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) and The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) have collaborated with the Department of Veteran Affairs Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This MOU will assist CILs and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) to collaboratively address Veteran needs. Information on NCIL and APRIL is on the back side of this information sheet.

Services

CILs provide services to the community as well as individuals. All CILs can provide:

- Information and Referral
- Peer Counseling
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Individual and Systems Change Advocacy

Staff at CILs can work with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) to collaboratively address Veteran needs. For Veterans receiving VR&E services under an independent living or vocationally-oriented rehabilitation plan, staff at a CIL may help by:

- problem solving and removing obstacles to completing the plan of services
- advocating for the Veteran
- teaching self-advocacy skills to increase Veteran empowerment
- finding a volunteer placement opportunity in the community
- informing the VRC about unmet needs that require further investigation
- coordinating activities not specifically in the Veteran's rehabilitation plan that will help the Veteran achieve plan goals
- advocating on a Veteran's behalf with a landlord for home modifications, especially if the housing is publicly subsidized (HUD, MSHDA, etc.)
- providing computer literacy training in the Veteran's home, under some circumstances
- reporting concerns that need attention to the VRC as soon as possible (via email or telephone, depending on the VRC's preference)
- maintaining contact with the Veteran to encourage participation in VR&E services
- helping coordinate other VA services through the VRC

Staff at the CIL will also help any consumer who is a Veteran contact the appropriate VA source for assistance.

Contact Information

Contact your local CIL to discuss other services that may be provided. To find a CIL near you, access: <http://www.ncil.org/directory.html>

About NCIL and APRIL

The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL), based in Washington, DC, is the longest-running national cross-disability, grassroots organization run by and for people with disabilities. Founded in 1982, NCIL represents thousands of organizations and individuals including: Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILCs), individuals with disabilities, and other organizations that advocate for the human and civil rights of people with disabilities throughout the United States. www.ncil.org

The Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL) is also a national grassroots consumer controlled, nonprofit membership organization consisting of Centers for Independent Living, their satellites and branch offices, Statewide Independent Living Councils, other organizations and individuals concerned with the independent living issues of people with disabilities living in rural America. APRIL has membership in 42 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. www.april-rural.org

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Regional Office Information

Station Name Updated: 02/21/2012	VREO	AVREO/CIC	RO Address
Chicago, IL	Mr. Evan Lewis 312-980-4441	Kelly Rodriguez 312-980-4442	2122 W. Taylor Street Chicago, IL 60612
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