

ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE & MOBILITY CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (AIM-CIL)

SO YOU WANT TO BE A BOARD MEMBER

This paper is intended to introduce you to what being a member of the Board of Directors of the Achieving Independence and Mobility Center for Independent Living is all about. As a board member, you will assume considerable responsibility for setting policy for the Center and assuring that the Center is efficiently and effectively managed.

ABOUT THE CENTER

MISSION:

AIM-CIL is a non-residential, not-for-profit corporation. Its mission is to be an effective vehicle for the development of a community without architectural, communication and attitudinal barriers for people with disabilities and to be a resource that they may use to become full and equal members of the community. In keeping with the Center's philosophy of consumer control, the Center is staffed primarily with persons with disabilities. It is also a mandate that at all times the majority of the Board of Directors are persons with disabilities.

The ultimate goal in providing medical and social services for people with disabilities is to enable them to live in the community with maximum self-reliance and productivity. Until recently, there were only two major components in this continuum: medical stabilization to protect life, and rehabilitation to help persons reach their maximum physical and intellectual capabilities.

These components, both institutional in nature, cannot in and of themselves respond to the difficult, critical transition from sheltered and highly supportive care to life in a community designed by and for the non-disabled.

Disability limits mobility and living options which the non-disabled community takes for granted. To a person using a wheelchair, high curbs, flights of stairs and revolving doors are insurmountable obstacles. To a person who is deaf, calling their local pharmacy to renew a prescription is an impossible mission. Use of public transportation is usually out of the question for persons with physical limitations and some with cognitive limitations. Housing and employment choices are sharply limited and must be made with care and foresight.

Apart from its physical implications, disability also creates psychological and economic barriers which the newly disabled person in particular can regard as overwhelming.

Concern for these issues - and the growing number of disabled people - has generated what is called the independent living movement: A community-based, nationwide effort to remove obstacles to independence, to change negative public attitudes toward persons with disabilities and to increase opportunities for self-sufficiency, self-determination and self-respect.

The Achieving Independence and Mobility Center for Independent Living (AIM-CIL) was established to complete the continuum of service for persons with disabilities in DuPage County. It embraces the independent living philosophy that calls for community based, consumer controlled programs, providing comprehensive services to persons with disabilities to help increase personal self-determination and advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities. For many disabled people, AIM-CIL serves as a bridge from dependence to independence.

WHY A BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Legal reasons - a governing Board of Directors is required by the General Not for Profit Corporation Act of 1986.

All of the board members are equal, sharing the same responsibilities to assure the success of the board of directors and the Center.

WHY CONSUMER CONTROLLED

The mandate of the independent living movement is consumer control - persons with disabilities directing and providing services to other persons with disabilities. This provides for role modeling and quality peer counseling. For this reason, the majority of persons on the Board of Directors must be persons with disabilities. This is in no way meant to diminish the importance of those Board Members who are not disabled.

OPERATIONAL PURPOSES SERVED BY YOU AND THE BOARD

To get a good sense of the operational necessity of having a board of directors, you should first review the functions usually performed by such a group. If you ask different people or read different manuals on the duties of a board of directors, you will get as many different answers as the number of sources you consult. Listed below, however, are the more widely accepted functions or duties of a Board of Directors.

FUNCTIONS OF THE BOARD:

1. To oversee the Center's operations, assuring that programs are run efficiently and effectively and in a manner which accomplishes the mission and long and short-term goals of the Center.
2. Develop policies and oversee the management which guides and supports the Center in meeting its goals.
3. Oversee the development of means for evaluating the success of the Center, staff and its programs.

4. Create and staff committees of the board (e.g. finance, program) to assure effective and efficient use of expertise and time.
5. Review, approve and monitor the annual budget of the Center.
6. Periodically review expenditures to assure that the Center's budget is spent in a way consistent with Center goals and based on sound principles of financial management.
7. Develop, review and update by-laws to assure the smooth operation of the Board of Directors.
8. Participate in the development and conducting of all fund raising activities.
9. Employ and regularly evaluate the performance of the Executive Director.
10. Support the Center throughout the community.
11. Assist in the development of strong leadership skills of all board members and the Center's management team.
12. Define the Center's mission, long-term goals and key short-term objectives.

Once you become a board member, you must ask yourself, "What am I expected to do? What specific things am I responsible for? How can I work to best help the board fulfill its purpose?" Your personal role on the board will, of course, depend on your own expertise, interests and time commitments. Listed below are some suggestions of things you should do in meeting your obligation to the board and the Center.

FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD MEMBER:

1. Attend every meeting of the board and any committee on which you serve.
2. Serve on one or more board committees in areas where your own work and life experience will best be used, or where you would like to expand your own expertise.
3. Assume responsibility assigned by the board president.
4. Take an active role in discussing and developing new policies and procedures for all Center matters, the Center's annual operating budget and spending plans.
5. Take an active role in reviewing and evaluating the Center's

major programs.

6. Prepare for each meeting by doing any homework necessary for you to be informed and take an active role in these meetings.
7. Show good judgment and common sense.
8. Avoid any conflict between your personal interests and your interests as a member of the board of directors.
9. Aid in fund raising activities.
10. Willingness to use personal and/or business contacts to assist the Center, when appropriate.
11. Participate in Center functions and activities.

All of the activities and tasks listed above may make things sound like you have agreed to take on a full-time job. To assure that this does not happen to you or other board members, the board has developed a greater reliance on working committees. By creating committees which focus on specialized aspects of the Center's needs, board members are allowed to make valuable contributions to the success of the Center without being deeply involved in every aspect of board business. It is estimated that each board member devotes 6 - 8 hours a month on board-related activities.

The idea behind creating the committees is to allow a relatively small number of board members to become very familiar with one or two aspects of the Center's operations. These few, then, become the sources and/or create information in their committee's area of focus for the entire Board of Directors. It is this information and its flow to the larger board which helps the board become more effective in carrying out its management and leadership responsibilities.

The Board of Directors has a designated executive committee which has the responsibility to lead the board. Other committees are: finance, personnel, program, development, advocacy and nominating. The particular mix of committees is determined by the Center's board based on the program areas needed to meet the Center's mission and goals.

Overall, serving on the board of directors does not come without obligation. It carries a strong need for commitment on your part, yet should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

COMMITMENT

Commitment takes many forms. Each individual, although dedicated to making the Center's mission their mission, is guided by their own thoughts and ideas. Please take a few moments to

complete the information on the following page. It will help you realize your true intent in considering membership to the DCIL board of directors and assist the board in evaluating your potential.

If you have questions regarding this material or the Center, please contact the Executive Director at the number below. We hope you are interested in being considered for a position of the AIM-CIL Board. Please complete the attached form and return it to:

**AIM-CIL
3130 Finley Rd.
Suite 500
Downers Grove, IL 60515**

**(630) 469-2300 V/TTY
(630)469-2606 Fax**

The following is from an article published by the Office of Rehabilitation Services which clearly defines independent living and the role of a Center for Independent Living.

WHAT IS INDEPENDENT LIVING?

First, some definitional history, so that we are all understanding the operational language we will be using in this article. The best place to begin is with the definition of Independent Living:

"a concept based on the premise that regardless of disabilities or vocational capabilities, all persons have a right and responsibility to determine the direction of their own lives and to fully and meaningfully participate as a member of society. It involves control over one's life based on the choice of acceptable options that minimize reliance on others in making decisions and in performing everyday activities. This includes managing one's affairs, participating in day-to-day life in the community, fulfilling a range of social roles, and making decisions that lead to self-determination and the minimization of physical and psychological dependence upon others."

Independent Living Philosophy has at its roots six basic foundation principles which include:

- **locus of control - the individual with the disability shall be in control.**
- **integration - avenues for complete and meaningful participation in society must exist and be expanded.**
- **advocacy - individual rights and liberties must be expanded for the individual and for the entire population of persons with disabilities.**
- **self-empowerment and determination - persons with disabilities shall have the full responsibilities of citizenship.**
- **focus on choices - the creation of alternative choices from which an individual with a disability can choose.**

Who administers the philosophy is as important as the philosophy itself. The medical and rehabilitation community could not administer it as each believe and practice that the solution to the problem of disability is to adapt persons with disabilities to the environment. Independent Living believes and put into practice the refreshing idea of adapting the environment to the individual with a disability.

The best illustration between Independent Living and Rehabilitation is the following paradigms (model) developed by Gerben DeJong in his paper, "The Movement of Independent Living: Origins, Ideology and Implications for Disability Research." Independent Living as a movement for social change is unique to existing programs and facilities providing services to people with disabilities. Specifically, DeJong refers to the "Rehabilitation Paradigm" and the Independent Living paradigm to describe the differences between traditional rehabilitation and the Independent Living Movement and Centers for Independent Living.

	<u>Rehabilitation Paradigm</u>	<u>I.L. Paradigm</u>
Definition of Problem	Physical or mental impairment: lack of vocational skill.	Dependence upon professionals and others.
Locus of Problem	In the individual.	In the environment. In the medical and rehabilitation process.
Solution to Problem	Professional intervention treatment.	Barrier removal; advocacy; self-help; consumer control.
Social Role	Individual with disability is a "patient" or "client".	Individual is a "consumer" of services.
Who Controls	Professional	Consumer
Desired Outcomes choices for	Maximum self-care, gainful employment.	Independence through control over acceptable daily living.

Administering this philosophy would have to be accomplished by "new" organization and such organizations would be called Centers for Independent Living.

"A Center for Independent Living (CIL) is a community-based, non-profit, non-residential program whose Board of Directors is composed of at least a majority of persons with disabilities and whose staff will be substantially comprised of persons with disabilities. A CIL provides directly, or coordinates indirectly through referral, those services which assist persons with severe disabilities to increase personal self-determination and to minimize unnecessary dependence on others."

ACHIEVING INDEPENDENCE & MOBILITY CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

DESCRIPTION OF COMMITTEES

Executive Committee's major function is to act on behalf of the board when the board is not in session.

Finance Committee is responsible for monitoring financial activities of the Center.

Personnel Committee is responsible for reviewing personnel policies, recommending updates when necessary, reviewing employee relations in the event of a grievance.

Program Committee is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of all programs and service.

Advocacy Committee is responsible in providing a communication network for our members on legislative efforts at the local, state and federal levels.

Development Committee is responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluation of the Center's fundraising plan.

Nominating Committee is responsible for recruitment and nomination of members of the Board of Directors.



BOARD MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

Name: _____ Date: _____

Home Address/City/State/Zip:

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Occupation:

Employer Name:

Employer Address:

Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?

Special skills/knowledge you are willing to share:

What committee(s) would you be interested in serving on?

Special interests in community:

Other directorships and memberships held (position and date):

Political or civic offices held (position and date):

Any comments you would like to add:

Thank you for considering membership to the AIM-CIL Board of Directors. If you have any questions or concerns, contact AIM-CIL's Executive Director at the following number: 630-469-2300.

QUESTIONS FOR POTENTIAL BOARD MEMBERS

- 1. Have you ever served on a Board of Directors before?**
- 2. What is your understanding of a not-for-profit organization and the role of board members?**
- 3. Please identify clubs and/or organizations with which you are currently involved.**
- 4. What particular talents or skills do you have to offer as a board member?**
- 5. As a Board Member, you will be expected to assist in fundraising programs in a manner suited to your ability. What abilities/strengths do you have to offer? Please identify any personal, community or business affiliations you have which might assist the Center.**

