



Southwestern Center for
Independent Living (SWCIL)

Serving People with Disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota



2021

ANNUAL REPORT

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OUR MISSION

The Southwestern Center for Independent Living (SWCIL) is dedicated to working with and responding to the ever changing needs of persons with disabilities in Southwestern Minnesota to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities.

A MESSAGE FROM LEADERSHIP



Pamela Russell
Board Chair



Melissa Doherty
Executive Director

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present you with SWCIL’s annual report for the federal fiscal year ending September 30, 2021. This report highlights consumer and program achievements such as improved access to homes, communities, transportation, employment, and other achievements in independent living. While these successes truly belong to our consumers and their efforts and determination, we also want to recognize here the tireless efforts of agency staff to adapt and remove barriers while taking steps to ensure health and safety in a challenging environment. Excellent outcomes in 2021 demonstrate this dedication.

Some highlights from 2021 include:

- Serving 417 consumers with consumer-directed independent living services
- Offering 27 community education classes
- Offering 11 community workshops
- Providing 9 social/recreational opportunities, fostering peer support relationships
- Serving on 25 councils, committees, and workgroups, advancing disability policies and efforts to promote awareness, access, and inclusion
- And more!

Thank you for joining us in this look back at the past year as we drive forward taking new skills, tools, and progress with us.

Sincerely,

Pamela Russell, Board Chair

Melissa Doherty, Executive Director

WHAT IS A CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING?

A CIL is mandated to provide five (5) core services:

- Advocacy – Individual and Systems
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Information Referral & Assistance
- Peer Counseling
- Relocation, Diversion and Youth Transition Services

CONSUMER CONTROL

In decision making, service delivery, management, and establishment of policy and direction of the Center including:

- Being governed by a board of directors comprised of at least 51% people with disabilities.
- Employing a minimum of 51% people with disabilities.

NONRESIDENTIAL

Private nonprofit agency designed and operated within a local community by individuals with disabilities and provides an array of IL services.

SWCIL services are provided in a setting of the consumer's choice, in their homes, schools, community locations, or online.

COMMUNITY BASED

Located in the area served by the CIL, responding to the unique needs of the area, and having knowledge of and access to local resources.

Catchment Counties: Big Stone, Chippewa, Cottonwood, Jackson, Lac Qui Parle, Lincoln, Lyon, Murray, Nobles, Pipestone, Redwood, Renville, Rock, Swift, and Yellow Medicine.

SELF-HELP AND SELF-ADVOCACY

Promotes self-help and self-advocacy among individuals with significant disabilities. 248 consumers received advocacy/legal services, 236 goals set, 40 achieved and 192 in-progress for consumers in the self-advocacy/self-empowerment life area.

CROSS DISABILITY

Ensuring that services are provided to individuals with a diversity of significant disabilities.

Conducted outreach with 83 entities (unduplicated) in an effort to reach underserved and unserved populations.

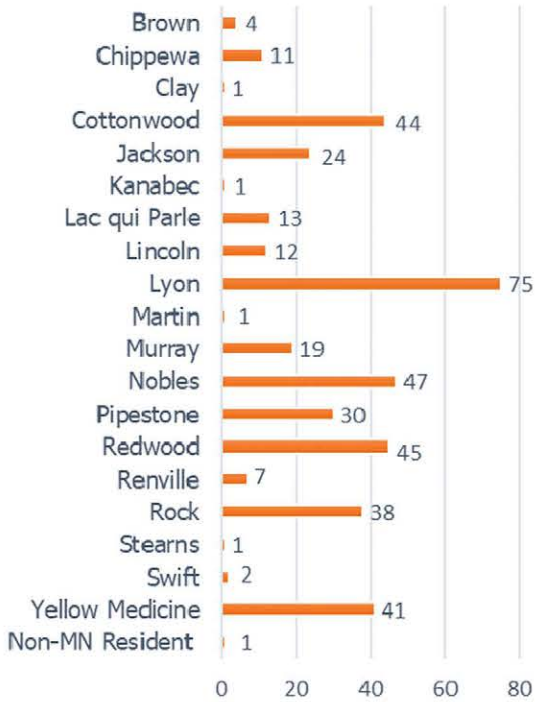
EQUAL ACCESS

Promotes equal access for individuals with disabilities in society and to all services, programs, activities, resources, and facilities, whether public or private.

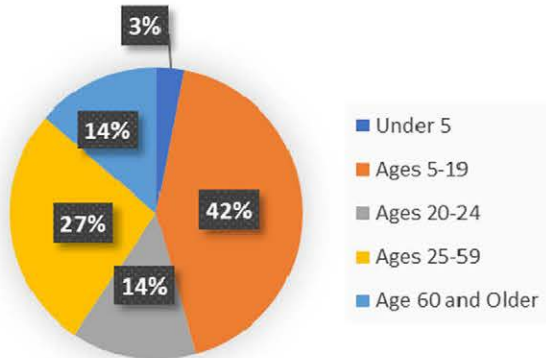
SWCIL staff provides input on equal access projects in local communities, as well as ensuring accessible set-up of meetings and events held by SWCIL.

CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS

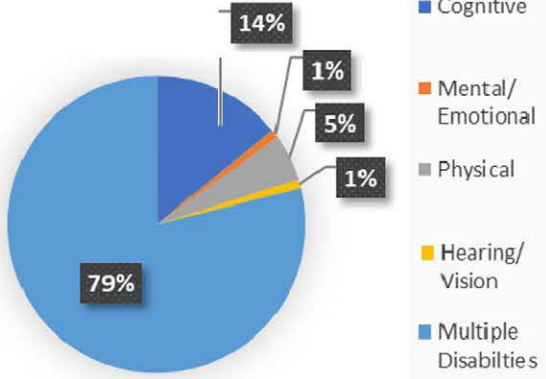
Consumers Served by County (417 Total)



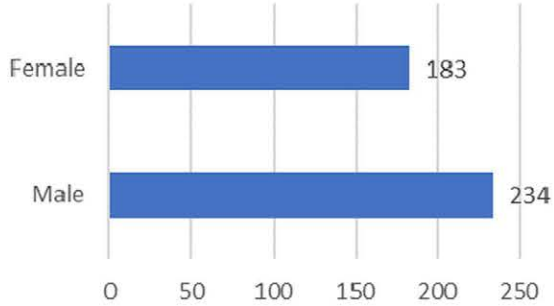
Age



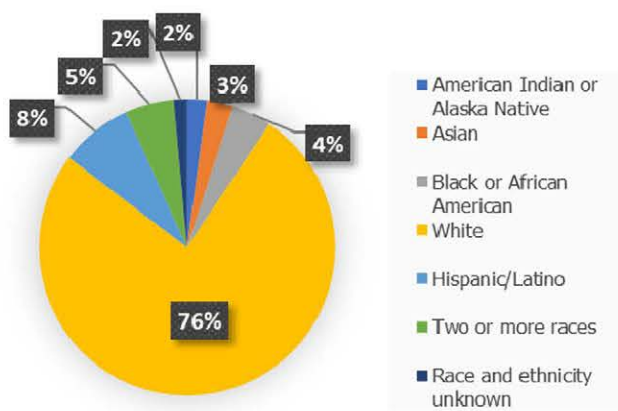
Disability



Gender



Ethnicity

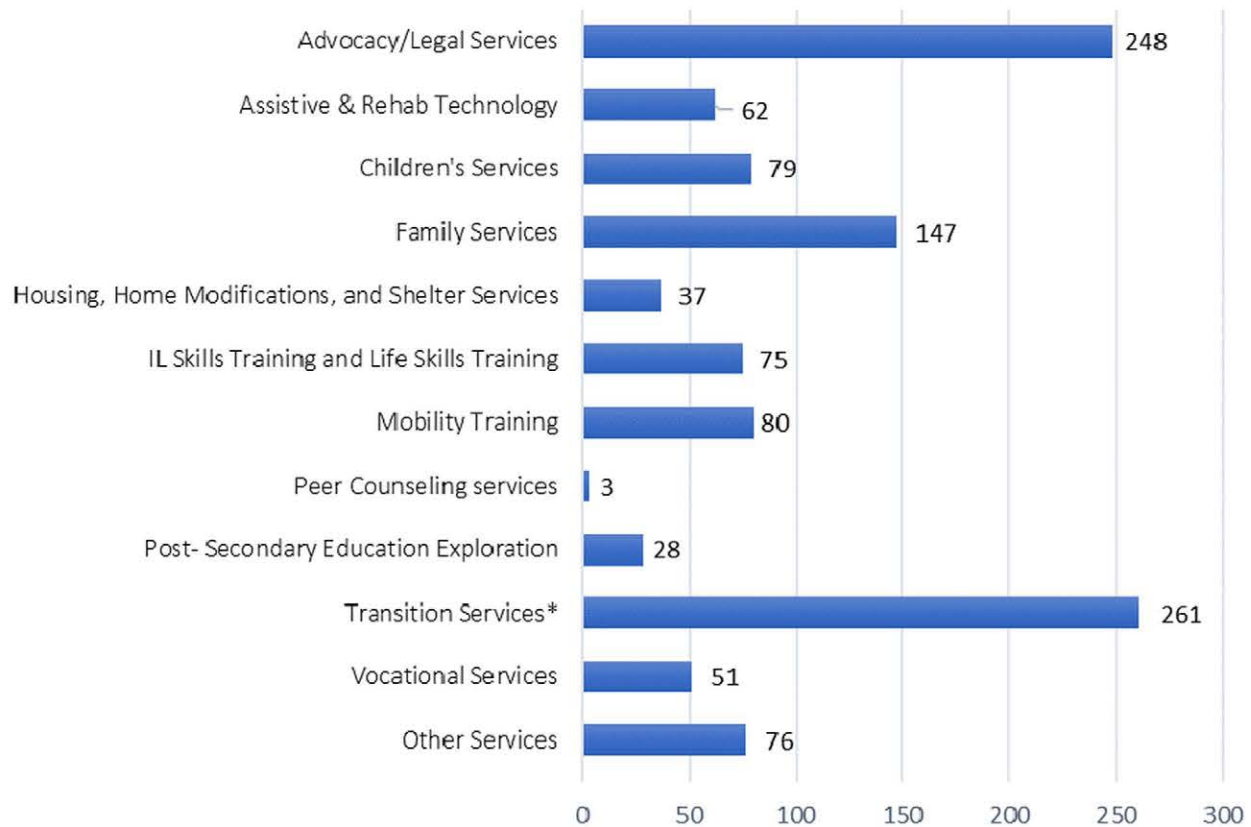


INDIVIDUAL SERVICES

SWCIL works in the least restrictive setting as chosen by the consumer, in their own homes, schools, and communities, to work on independent living goals the consumer defines.

During FFY 2021 the following services were requested by and provided to individuals with disabilities living in Southwest Minnesota.

Service Types & Number of Individuals Served



*Transition Services include relocation to community living, prevention of institutionalization, and youth transition to post-secondary life.



CONSUMER OUTCOME HIGHLIGHTS

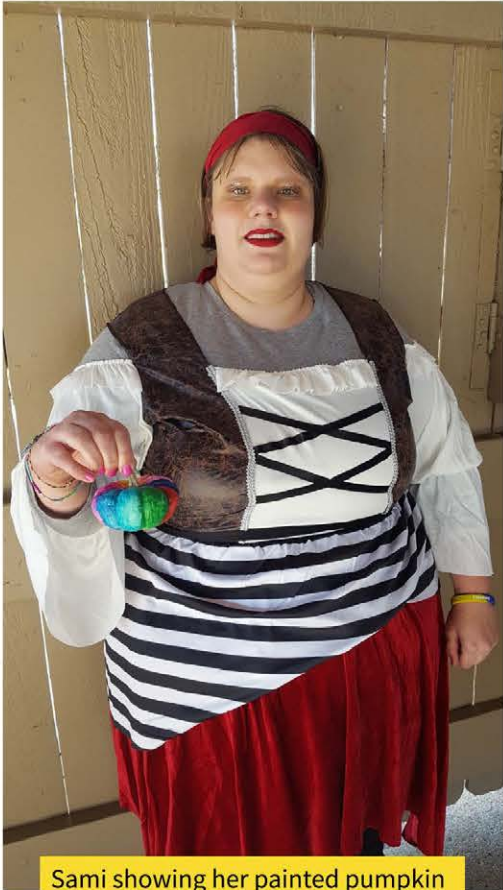
Significant Individual Consumer Achievements:

- **Ten** consumers obtained competitive community employment.
- **Three** consumers were assisted in sustaining employment.
- **Fourteen** consumers obtained their driver's permit and/or other necessary means to acquire driving independence.
- **Ten** consumers gained entrance into post-secondary education.
- **Five** consumers secured Social Security benefits improving their financial stability.
- **Thirty-three** consumers sustained their independent living situation.
- **One** consumer relocated from a nursing home or other institution to a community-based living arrangement.
- **Two hundred and five** at-risk consumers received services that prevented institutionalization.



Ben driving after passing test.

“ Have come a long way from 2 years ago ”



Sami showing her painted pumpkin at the Halloween Party!

CONSUMER SUCCESS HIGHLIGHTS

OBTAINED INDEPENDENCE

An individual with limited mobility was referred to SWCIL for assistance with finding a safe and accessible place to live and securing needed services and supports. In their living situation at the time, they had been denied access to the community including medical services and supports. SWCIL helped secure immediate needs including food, personal care services, and access to the community. Utilizing a team approach, several providers came together to assist with securing accessible housing, medical assistance, social security benefits, food assistance, personal care services, and medical equipment. This individual is now safe, living in an accessible apartment, and is learning to live on their own.

VOCATIONAL SKILLS

A young woman whose dream was to be a cosmetologist found it extremely difficult to speak to people she did not know. As a senior in high school, she realized that to be successful in her career she would need to learn how to interact with people. With SWCIL assistance, she began to initiate interactions with school staff and students. She continued to challenge herself by starting conversations with other classmates. When her college classes began, she continued to work on her goal of interacting with new people, beginning with her new classmates and teaching staff. When it was time to start interacting with customers, she felt able to begin conversations to not only gain insight into their cosmetology needs, but also to participate in “small talk.” She and her instructors were pleased with her success.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION EXPLORATION

A 45-year-old man was unable to continue in his current career due to an injury that resulted in long term disability. He wished to explore post-secondary schooling in his area of interest. SWCIL aided in exploring vocational technical colleges as well as other courses. The Private Industry Council (PIC) offered to assist with paying for a CDL (Commercial Driver’s License) course. After reviewing his options, he took the CDL course and has taken the written test. He is on track to getting his CDL and plans to look for a job in his home area.

ACCESSED NEEDED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

The parents of a young child with autism sought help from SWCIL to access needed supports and services. Their son struggled with learning new tasks, some depth perception and sensory issues, communication difficulties that regularly ended with negative behaviors, and required a lot of supervision for safety concerns. The child’s mother worked with SWCIL to learn about programs and services available to their son, and ways to work toward further independence. SWCIL staff worked with the family to secure disability-based MA and to prepare for the MNChoices assessment in order to identify all his needs and secure a DHS waiver with a budget that would meet his needs. After the child was approved for the CADI waiver, the family worked with a SWCIL support planner to get the support services and items he needed, that the family could not otherwise afford, to help with communication and sensory issues. They also began occupational therapy and speech therapy, services that they didn’t know could be offered outside of school.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS: COVID RESPONSE

Filing an Appeal

A senior citizen with a disability had lost his part-time job due to the Covid-19 pandemic and was notified by Minnesota Unemployment that he received payments in error and would have to repay \$5,000 in benefits received. This man reached out to SWCIL for assistance with filing an appeal. He was overwhelmed with the process due to recent health concerns and depression. He lived paycheck to paycheck and could not repay the money. SWCIL staff assisted him with learning the steps to file an appeal. He gathered evidence that the job was lost due to the Covid-19 pandemic and participated in a phone appeal. The appeals judge ruled in his favor allowing him to keep the payments already received and ruled he was owed an additional \$7,000.

Mask Distribution

Through FEMA's Project America Strong and HHS/ACL, SWCIL received 32,500 adult-sized cloth face masks to be donated to any individual who needed them. Additionally, SWCIL purchased packs of disposable and reusable masks in various sizes, from extra-large to child-size. During FFY 2021, a total of 28,840 masks were distributed to individuals with disabilities, their caregivers and family members, and the community at-large.

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The Someplace Safe Crisis Center's Parenting Time program was at risk of temporary closure. Because of Minnesota's mask mandate all participants and staff were required to wear a mask and the program had only 10 masks left. Through FEMA's Project America Strong SWCIL supplied 1,000 masks to the Parenting Time program, diverting closure and continuing an essential service for families.

The CDC issued an order requiring face masks to be worn by all people while on public transportation. Helping local transportation providers and riders comply with the order, SWCIL distributed 8,000 reusable cloth face masks.



Pallet outside SWCIL offices containing 25 boxes of cloth face masks to distribute in the local community.



SWCIL staff holding a box of cloth masks from the FEMA Masks Project.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS: PEER MENTORING

Fostering peer support relationships

SWCIL sponsors the Marshall Area Social Recreation community group, which provides socialization activities and opportunities to develop and foster peer support relationships at events planned by and for the disability community. The COVID-19 pandemic limited activities that could be offered in FFY 2021. Utilizing virtual platforms, SWCIL hosted virtual dances, coloring club activities, and a crafting activity. Video and call-in options were provided, with support available to help individuals connect to virtual events. Warmer weather provided an opportunity to host in-person events at outside locations that supported social distancing and COVID-19 prevention protocols. A volunteer committee of individuals with disabilities meets once per year to plan events. During the period of October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021, Marshall Area Social Rec. held 9 events. A total of 80 participants (duplicated count) attended these events.

SWCIL facilitates an ongoing, participant led, interactive forum for parents/caregivers/ guardians of children (of all ages) with disabilities to share struggles, offer ideas and resources, provide and receive on-going peer support, and encourage and explore helpful means to advocate for their children. During FFY 2021 sixteen parents of children with disabilities attended this group. Topics of discussion included various benefits, services and providers, schools and IEPs, youth transition, legal representation options, struggles securing appropriate services, social isolation, and advocacy for their child.

SWCIL provided Peer Mentoring services to three consumers during FFY 2021. Peer mentors are matched, on a cross-disability basis, with SWCIL consumers to assist with a variety of consumer directed independent living objectives/goals.



Cathy, Mike, Sara, Jane LuAnn, Deb, and Jeanine at the Tie-Dye Craft Night

LARGE GROUP DANCES/ACTIVITIES:

3 events, 41 participants

COLORING CLUB:

4 events, 13 participants

CRAFT NIGHT:

2 events, 26 participants



RAMP PROGRAM

Building modular residential ramps, low rise long tread steps, and exterior entrance railings.

A consumer in Lincoln County had been unable to leave her home without the help of at least 2 people to aid her in going up and down the three feet of stairs to her home. Because she could not get her electric wheelchair up the steps and into her home it was left outside or in her uninsulated garage. The consumer explained that because of her situation, her electric wheelchair had become unreliable and often needed expensive battery replacements. This consumer was so excited to use her new ramp; she and her family waited at the top of the ramp in her covered porch until the last railing was installed so they could bring her chair to her.

“ Thank you for setting up the ramp for the wheelchair, it has made it possible for me to develop a dignified independent living plan. ”

TEMPORARY RAMP RENTAL PROGRAM

Providing temporary residential access solutions to facilitate: the prevention of institutionalization; relocation to the home/community-based living settings of an individual’s choice; societal inclusion; and/or the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to explore the use of AT to remove access barriers.

With the use of a rental ramp and the assistance and care of family members, a consumer from Pipestone County was able to continue to live in her home while scheduling treatment for her ongoing battle with cancer. The family expressed how grateful they were to be able to care for her in the comfort of her own home and in her own bed.



**In FFY 2021 SWCIL completed:
7 Ramp Construction Projects
2 Home Modification Projects
6 Temporary Ramp Placements**

MEET OUR STAFF

9.56 Number of SWCIL Full-Time Staff with Disabilities



Top row: Adam Chandler, Shanda Walker, Jennifer Cox, Angie Newville.
 Row Two: Deb Gratz, Jen Thovson, Stephanie Shafer, Annette Swanson.
 Row Three: Sharlett Glidden, Melissa Doherty, Linda Halbur, Teri Woelfel.
 Row Four: Ted Stamp, Harry Remley, Kristina Tollefson, Ruth Hubbling.

SWCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Pamela Russell
Chair



Cody Seehafer
Vice Chair



Derek Klinkner
Treasurer



Leah Hastad
Secretary



Maria Trejo
Member



Tashauna Swanson
Member



Carrie Stiernagle
Member

5 Number of Board Members with Significant Disabilities

FINANCIAL SOURCES

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Support for Core Independent Living Services

State..... \$339,203
Federal..... \$183,104

Total Support for CIL Services..... \$522,307

Other Contracts

Funding to support preventing, preparing for and responding to COVID-19. Appropriated through the Coronavirus Preparedness and Response Supplemental Appropriations Act and OMB Memorandum M-20-11 – Administrative Relief for Recipients and Applicants of Federal Financial Assistance Directly Impacted by the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Federal..... \$ 101,530

Total Public Support..... \$623,837

PROGRAM SERVICE REVENUE

Ramp Program, Veteran Directed Care, Consumer Directed Community Support – Support Planner Services, & Other Sources

Revenue..... \$245,713

Total Program Service Revenue..... \$245,713

OTHER SOURCES OF REVENUE

Other \$5,940

Total Other Sources..... \$ 5,940

Grand Total from All Revenue Sources..... \$875,490

GET INVOLVED!

VOLUNTEER

We place tremendous value on the individuals, groups, and companies that support our goals. Volunteers can make a large impact by giving a small amount of their time.

Join us at www.swcil.com

DONATE

As a non-profit organization, we rely on the generosity of people like you. Join us in our mission to promote societal acceptance, inclusion, and equal access for all persons with disabilities.

Support our work at www.swcil.com

“The people that work with me are very caring, and help me whenever I need help.”

“I think this program is good.”

“You do a great job already and met my expectations.”

“They do good.”

“They are very good at their job now-no improvement needed.”

“You guys are doing great with all the covid restrictions-hope we can get past them soon!”

“Thank you for all you do.”

“You met all my needs, no improvements needed.”

“Great services and equipment availability.”

“All respect and love to SWCIL. Thanks much.”



This document is available in alternate formats upon request.

Contact us at swcil@swcil.com or 507-532-2221.