

MetroWest Center For Independent Living

Covid-19

Social Distancing

Stay at Home

Testing Elections

Vaccine

Black Disabled
Lives Matter

Health Care

Toilet Paper

Deaths

Vote By Mail

Remote Learning

Crisis

Closed

Isolation

Food Insecurity

Masks

Zoom

Wash Your Hands

2020 Annual Report

Serving 26 Communities

Ashland	Bellingham	Dover
Foxboro	Framingham	Franklin
Holliston	Hopkinton	Hudson
Marlboro	Maynard	Medfield
Medway	Millis	Natick
Needham	Norfolk	Plainville
Sherborn	Southboro	Stow
Sudbury	Wayland	Wellesley
Weston	Wrentham	



Message from the Executive Director

Mission Statement

MWCIL enhances the full participation of persons with disabilities in the community.

Vision

All people with disabilities are empowered to choose how they experience Independent Living.

Leadership Team

- Paul W. Spooner—Executive Director
- Rose Quinn—Assistant Director
- David Correia— Director of Advocacy
- Danya DelMonaco—Director of Services
- Winifred McGraw—Executive Assistant

Board of Directors

- Joe Bellil—President
- Edward Carr—Vice President
- Michael Kennedy—Treasurer
- Tammy Laverty—Secretary
- Sebastian Leu
- Tyler Terrasi

2020 will go down in the record books for overwhelming losses and incredibly difficult living. When we first shut down in March, we never dreamed this would last the rest of the year and beyond.

MWCIL has maintained services throughout the year. With a skeleton in-house crew and new laptops to enable remote work, our staff remained responsive to our consumers. See our Covid-19 page for details about our year.

Advocacy work continued with the focus on the Architectural Access Board improvements. Once again, our efforts were not successful, but we will continue to pressure the legislature to do the right thing.

MWCIL is committed to employing a diverse staff, and to continuing to serve diverse consumers. The BLM movement has highlighted similar police mishandling of people with disabilities. Justice is very uneven for black people with disabilities. MWCIL supports increased diversity training for police and other public servants.

Not every single thing has been bad. A handful of things that we have requested for a long time is now mainstream. For example, remote working is not at the whim of a supervisor and instead is based on the job, and telehealth is supported by insurance. Both have proven to work well for many situations, and we hope they will live on when the pandemic has ended, as these make life easier for some people with disabilities.

We had successes, working with Rev Up MA and the Disability Law Center, in improving voting accessibility for the 2020 elections. While improvements were designated as 2020 only, having positive experiences should make it easier to get permanent changes through the legislature.

We are hoping for improvements in 2021. The vaccine has started rolling out which should make most things easier. The vaccine timeline is currently projected into June. Even with delays, some minimal returns to normalcy should include in-person learning, fully functioning health care and in-person support services.



MWCIL will continue to fight for the advancement of disability rights and to increase the opportunities for people with disabilities.

Sincerely, Paul W. Spooner

Financial



Statements of Activities and Changes in Net Assets for the Period Ended June 30, 2020

Support and Revenue

Support and Revenues:

Government Funded Contracts	\$1,175,996
Service Fees	14,000
Gifts, Grants and Contributions	13,488
Other Income	-
Total Support and Revenues	1,203,484

Functional Expenses:

Program Services:

Independent Living Services	853,236
Statewide Independent Living Council	138,866
Total Program Services	992,102

Supporting Services:

Administrative	179,971
Total Supporting Services	179,971
Total Functional Expenses	1,172,073

Changes in Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions

31,411

Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions — Beginning of Year

392,225

Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions — End of Year

\$423,636

Statements of Financial Position for the Period Ended June 30, 2020

Assets

Current Assets:

Cash	\$245,410
Accounts Receivable, Program Services	240,797
Deferred Compensation Account	11,994
Prepaid Expenses	13,085
Total Current Assets	511,286

Property and Equipment:

Office Furniture and Equipment	33,081
Less: Accumulated Depreciation	(30,076)
Net Property and equipment	2,005

Other Assets

Security Deposits	4,162
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Total Assets

\$517,453

Liabilities and Net Assets

Current Liabilities:

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$24,119
Accrued Payroll and Related Costs	44,921
Deferred Compensation Plan Obligation	11,994
Deferred Revenue	12,783
Total Current Liabilities	93,817

Net Assets without Donor Restrictions:

Available for Operations	421,631
Invested in Property and Equipment	2,005

Total Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions

423,636

Total Liabilities and Net Assets

517,453



The Core Services

at MetroWest Center for Independent Living

Total number of staff	15
Staff with disabilities	10
Consumers Served	567
Individual Services	1538
Service Hours	5261

Options Counseling

For individuals needing long term care services, we provide information and assistance in connecting with appropriate resources. This service is typically needed during a time of crisis or when an individual's situation is changing dramatically. Learning their options allows consumers to make informed decisions about their care and where to receive it.

Besides counseling, Elizabeth normally spends significant time in outreach at hospitals, senior centers and other area institutions, so that when a crisis hits, individuals are aware that MWCIL Options Counseling can help them analyze their situation and select the best choices.



MWCIL is committed to serving the diverse members of the community.

Information and Referral

MetroWest Center for Independent Living provides disability and community related information to all individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers, and community members who request it. We hold housing and driver's education workshops.

Peer Support

One-on-one peer mentoring helps people with disabilities develop mutual support, assistance, confidence and understanding. MWCIL provides peer support in a consumer-directed manner over the telephone, in person at the center, or at a consumer's living site.

Advocacy

MWCIL participates in Advocacy based on consumer and/or community issues. MWCIL advocates for needed legislation as well as funding and enforcement of existing laws to improve the quality of life for all people living with disabilities. MWCIL also supports consumer self advocacy which empowers consumers to be assertive and articulate when faced with obstacles to independent living goals.

Independent Living Skills Training

Independent living skills training is personally tailored to achieve consumers' goals. Some skills relate to personal growth, others relate to learning more about how to handle and navigate services and responsibilities.

Transition

Since 2015, Transition has been recognized by the Administration for Community Living as a fifth core service. At MWCIL, we have always supplied transition services as we move consumers from institutions to the community, as we work with youths transitioning to adulthood (TAP), and as we aid consumers living with changing disabilities to maintain their independence.





Other Services

Transition to Adulthood Program

The TAP Coordinator works with local students as they prepare for higher education, work, and life after high school. Outreach is key, as the student population changes every year, and we expand throughout our service area.

Goals may include college preparation, obtaining a driver’s license, improving time management, financial and social skills, job search and interview skills. The TAP Coordinator advocates at IEP meetings, and supports senior projects that match student interests and strengths. The Coordinator tailors services to the individual needs of students and works with families and schools to support their community involvement.

Community Transition

We are experts on helping people move out of nursing homes and into the community. This process is long and complex. The sometimes daunting tasks include:

- Navigating housing
- Setting up a new household
- Acquiring new services
- Maintaining good health care
- Learning transportation systems

No one should have to live in an institution.

TAP—Transition to Adulthood Program

The Transition to Adulthood Program serves 14-22 year old students with disabilities. Most youth services are no longer available after age 22, so it’s critical for students to plan and prepare for their transition into adult services. Our traditional IL Core services are tailored to young people and their age-related needs. Students learn skills and self-confidence so they can successfully transition from special education to an independent adulthood. Expectations for students with disabilities are evolving with broader opportunities for internships, job placements and advanced education and training. TAP seeks to help students connect to these opportunities and become active participants in the community.

One Care

One Care is an option for adults age 21-64 at the time of enrollment who are eligible for both MassHealth and Medicare benefits. The goal of One Care is to offer a better, simpler way for people with disabilities to get all the care they need in one streamlined, integrated, person-centered plan. MWCIL staff serve as Long Term Support Services Coordinators and assess consumer goals, needs and supports. As part of the Integrated Care Team, MWCIL staff work with our contracted One Care partner (Commonwealth Care Alliance), to get appropriate supports approved and put in place. Examples of services include arranging homemaking services, transportation, and home health services.





Advocacy

Legislators' Forum

The annual Legislative Breakfast on January 31, 2020, was sponsored by the MetroWest Center for Independent Living and Easter Seals of MA. In attendance, in addition to MWCIL and Easter Seals staff, were Karen Langley from REquipment, Rep. Jack Lewis, Rep. Carolyn Dykema, Rep. Carmine Gentile, Rep. Dave Linsky, Senator Becca Rausch and Rep. Kate Hogan.

Paul Spooner spoke about MWCIL priorities which included an increase in IL Funding (4120-0200), an increase in Independent Living Assistance (TAP, DME Reuse and AT) (4120-4000), an increase in the Alternative Housing Voucher Program, alignment of AAB laws with the ADA and passing an act prohibiting discrimination against adults with disabilities in Family and Juvenile Court proceedings.

Karen Langley asked for continued funding. The governor's budget had dropped the funding for this important program. Karen brought impressive numbers for the legislators detailing the number of people helped by REquipment in their districts.

Joe Bellil and Catherine Fradenburg from Easter Seals of MA spoke about Assistive Technology and the innovative loan programs they have developed. Eleanor spoke of how much AT from Easter Seals has improved her life as her eyesight has deteriorated.

2020 brought challenges to the legislators as well as to advocates as everyone tried to find remote connections. Budgets were delayed, and the legislators struggled with how to legally vote on their bills. And of course, Covid-19 took resources from every department and jurisdiction in the Commonwealth. Our annual IL Education Day was cancelled.

During the pandemic, we have continued to advocate for rights and services for people with disabilities.

David Correia, our Advocacy Director, addressed over 60 access complaints, and monitored polling sites for both accessibility and Covid-19 safety. He provided expertise to our towns regarding the accessibility of their future development projects. He also made sure that local free food distribution sites are accessible.

The Massachusetts Access Bill

Formerly known as the Architectural Access Bill

Activists simply want MA standards to comply with 2010 federal standards for accessible design. This compliance will increase the number of accessible homes and accessible jobs. David and Paul continue to strongly support these efforts.

Alternative Housing Voucher Program

Housing continues to be a major issue. Advocacy efforts statewide resulted in an increase of \$4.5 million for the Alternative Housing Voucher Program. 12.5 million was signed into the 2021 budget.



Advocacy



REV Up Massachusetts (REVUpMA.org)

MWCIL played a significant role in supporting REV UP by managing the website and email blasts to over 450 people in the disability community. MWCIL actively worked on voter registration and ensuring that voting remained accessible in our communities.

REV Up and the Disability Law Center played a key role in making legislators aware of the needs of people with disabilities with the changing voting rules and options. Thanks to their efforts, on-line voting was in place in time for the November election. The population most affected and restricted by 2020 were voters who cannot fill out a paper ballot.

Vote by Mail was extremely helpful to voters with disabilities who have difficulties with transportation and mobility, or who need to be isolated during the pandemic. Vote by mail and extended early voting were important to everyone—making them one of the few advantages of the pandemic, as long as these features are extended to future elections. On-line voting is a huge benefit for people with certain disabilities, and we hope that this feature is also extended and perfected.



The REV Up Conference was successfully held on-line with a great line up of topics and speakers including Marlene Sallo, ED of Disability Law Center, national and state election officials and disability rights advocates. More people with disabilities than ever before voted.

Dignity Alliance (DignityAllianceMA.org)

MWCIL also manages the website and weekly email for this new grass-roots coalition dedicated to secure fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support and care. While problems with these services is nothing new, Covid-19 has highlighted and exacerbated the issues with congregate residences.

Fernald Protest

When the City of Waltham partnered with the Lions Club for a holiday light show at the Fernald Center, disability advocates were disturbed by the disrespect shown to the former residents of this site of human rights abuse and experimentation on children. Three years ago, the city had promised to turn the buildings into a memorial museum and instead has allowed the site to deteriorate. A protest rally was held at City Hall, and other rallies were held at the Fernald.





Consumer Stories

These Consumer Success Stories are written by MWCIL staff. All names have been changed. As these stories demonstrate, *every situation is different*. Sometimes a person needs something relatively simple to remain independent, other situations are very complex.

Jessica

Jessica, 16 years old, was referred by Ashland High School (AHS) for help exploring educational, vocational and independent living goals as she had been struggling academically and behaviorally for some time due to her learning disorder and mental health disability. The TAP Coordinator began working with Jessica over the summer during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Upon starting the Fall semester 100% remotely, Jessica had great difficulty completing school work online through EduCERE, a third party contracted by AHS, and eventually gave up on it altogether with plans to drop out of school for the year. Jessica's mother had decided not to send her daughter to school in person due to fears of exposure to COVID-19, but Jessica refused to do online work using that platform and instead spent her time playing video games and hanging out with friends.

With patient communication, the TAP Coordinator discovered Jessica's reluctance to do remote work wasn't due to her attitude but rather her inability to process written assignments independently. Jessica expressed a desire to obtain her diploma and a willingness to complete school work if she could have audio/video instruction. With consistent support from the TAP Coordinator, including peer counseling and positive reinforcement for Jessica, as well as strong advocacy on her behalf with her mother and school staff, the school agreed to offer extra accommodations to increase social distancing for Jessica if she would accept coming to school in person a few days a week. This would make her eligible to use Ashland High's online learning platform which included video instruction and 1-1 support from AHS staff.

Jessica's mother communicated that her top priorities were to support her daughter's education and mental health. The TAP Coordinator helped Jessica's mother recognize that these would both be at higher risk of harm if Jessica pulled out of school altogether, and that going to school would be equally (if not less) risky than Jessica's current trips to the grocery store, friends' homes and her weekend job. As such, we obtained her permission for the hybrid option and Jessica returned to school. Jessica's mother and some school staff communicated their belief that Jessica wouldn't follow through with school beyond one week based on past performance, and suggested she abandon the diploma track to obtain a GED.

Despite the misgivings and with consistent encouragement from the TAP Coordinator, Jessica returned to school and has been successfully completing her work. She is feeling empowered and more confident in herself. She is very appreciative of TAP support and looks forward to continuing to pursue her diploma so she can improve her future job options.



Consumer Stories

Shawn

MWCIL started working with Shawn, who is 18 years old and has autism, in May of 2020. Shawn wanted to work on his executive functioning skills and to study for his learner's permit.

Initially, all meetings had to be coordinated by emailing his mother, to make sure that Shawn remembered that we had a meeting scheduled for that week. With encouragement and instruction from MWCIL, Shawn has taken on the role of scheduling all of his meetings on his own and replying back promptly with meeting confirmations and other email communications.

Shawn has also shown a tremendous amount of progress with studying for his learner's permit and passed on his first attempt! He is now pursuing getting his driver's license. Shawn has made all the arrangements to enroll himself in a driver's education program on his own and has completed all of the required hours to be eligible to take his road test, which he is planning on taking in the next month or so.

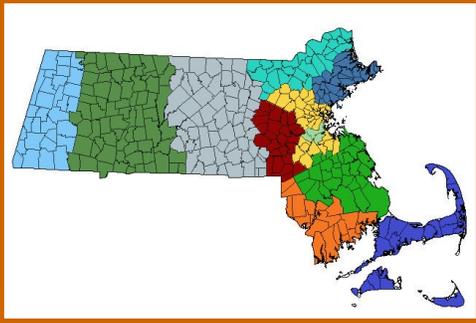
MWCIL is very proud of the progress that he has made not only with developing his study habits and work ethic to obtain his learner's permit but also taking the initiative to enroll himself in a driver's education program to obtain his driver's license. Shawn is currently working on developing job readiness skills because he wants to find a part-time job before he graduates from high school in June of 2021. He has also shown a tremendous amount of improvement with taking an active role in his own life and working hard to be independent.

Gregory

Gregory (who is 37 and a cancer survivor whose disabilities include PTSD and arthritis) has been working with MWCIL since February of 2019.

Since July 2019, we have focused entirely on securing affordable housing as Gregory has been chronically homeless since 2012. The related tasks included assisting Gregory in responding to correspondence from various Housing Authorities, updating his application in CHAMP and occasionally contacting Housing Authorities directly. Gregory has actively participated in and taken the lead in these efforts.

In the middle of December 2020, Gregory was contacted by the Chicopee Housing Authority's Tenant Selection department and informed that he had come to the top of their waiting list! A unit had become available, pending receipt of verifying documents, which Gregory has provided. Gregory was also informed that he has come to the top of the Tynngsborough Housing Authority waiting list, proving that hard work and dedication will help accomplish even the toughest goals.



MASILC

Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council

10 Independent Living Centers

Ad-Lib, Inc. - Pittsfield

Boston Center for Independent Living - Boston

Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled - Hyannis

Center for Living and Working, Inc. - Worcester

Disability Resource Center - Salem

Independence Associates, Inc. - East Bridgewater

MetroWest Center for Independent Living - Framingham

Northeast Independent Living Program - Lawrence

Southeast Center for Independent Living - Fall River

STAVROS - Amherst

MWCIL provides administrative support and is the financial conduit for the Massachusetts SILC. Under the leadership of Sadie Simone, MASILC has become an effective organization for people with disabilities state wide. MWCIL staff, Paul Spooner and David Correia actively participate in MASILC efforts.

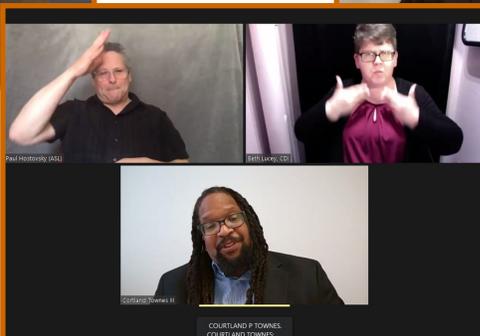
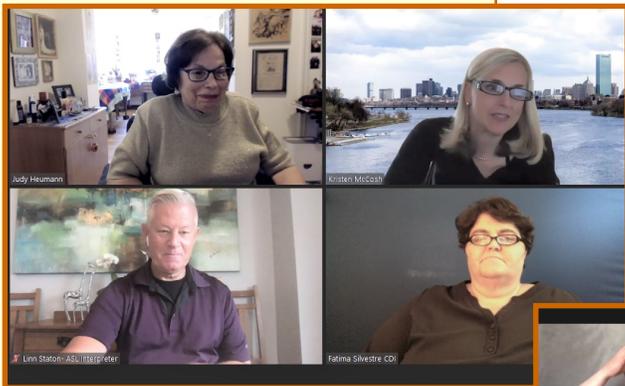
The **Statewide Independent Living Education Day** is held annually at the State House in Boston. The 2020 event was scheduled for March 12, but the State House shut down that same day due to Covid-19.

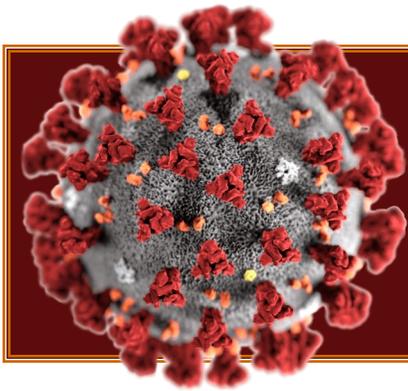
MASILC was not able to host their annual Dunn State Park celebration for the 30th Anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

30th Anniversary of the ADA

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act. While the ADA has provided the disability community with increased access we recognize that much work still needs to be done to ensure equitable access for all.

The City of Boston Mayor's Commission for Persons with Disabilities and the Boston Center for Independent Living on July 22nd joined forces and hosted a virtual event to discuss how far we have come and what the future of disability rights looks like with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.





Covid-19

The challenges we have faced at MWCIL are too numerous to list. Our staff has stepped up to the challenge, and we have been able to provide high quality services to everyone who has requested them.

Unfortunately, traditional methods of outreach, especially for those with the biggest need such as nursing home residents, have been shut down. Even family members are unable to visit people in most congregate settings. The stories coming from nursing homes and other congregate settings are horrific, with the virus spreading unchecked through entire facilities. To help highlight and address these problems, MWCIL has joined with Dignity Alliance MA. Our role will focus on Community Supports in order to assist people to remain living in, or transitioning to, their own homes. While our former contacts still may make us aware of opportunities, this barrier has made communication with residents extremely difficult. Few have computer access, fewer are technically savvy enough to communicate on platforms such as Zoom and some do not even have phones. That said, our staff nevertheless managed to move some people out.

Communication during Covid-19 has relied on technology. Many of our consumers cannot afford Wi-Fi and computers, or are not skilled in technology. We have been able to get almost everything done using the telephone, but it is not the same as in-person visits, or even a face-to-face Zoom meeting. And again, everyone who has requested our services has been helped by MWCIL staff!

Our consumers are among those most affected by Covid-19. Many have isolated themselves because of comorbidities. The simplest of tasks, such as getting groceries, becomes daunting. Transportation is more difficult or appears unsafe. PCAs have become harder to find. Doctors' office visits can also be a source of anxiety. Telehealth is good for some visits but again, a consumer has to have and be versed in technology. So some consumers are facing deteriorating health as appointments and procedures are postponed.

We also hear that isolated people with disabilities have not been considered in the vaccine rollout. While they have priority, no mechanism has been put in place for them to actually get the vaccine, such as home visits. Testing has had similar issues with most testing sites being drive-thru only that do not accept walk-ins.

For those with technology, some of the effects of Covid-19 have been positive. For the first time, the entire staff of MWCIL was able to attend the annual conference of the National Council for Independent Living. While it was not as thrilling as participating in-person, in Washington DC, it was a privilege to attend the conference. The conference focused on fighting disability discrimination, and the intersections of independent living and Black Disabled Lives Matter, among other matters.

And for consumers with technology, more and more workplaces allow remote work, and insurance now covers telehealth.

Voting by mail made voting safe and easier for most people, and especially those with transportation or mobility issues. We hope that this continues to be available in future years. Electronic voting was put in place for those who cannot fill out a ballot, and we also need that to become part of the permanent voting options.

MetroWest Center for Independent Living

was created by people with disabilities seeking full integration into society. MWCIL empowers people with disabilities with the practical skills and self-confidence to take control over their lives and become active members of the communities in which they live. MWCIL works to promote access and change within society and responds with programs and services to meet the needs of people of all ages with a wide range of disabilities.

**MetroWest Center for Independent Living
280 Irving Street
Framingham, MA 01702
508-875-7853
www.mwcil.org
info@mwcil.org**