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March 2021

The Covid-19 Lockdown has lasted a year. Our annual Independent Living Education Day at the State House had been scheduled for March 12, 2020. The State House was abruptly closed the day before - too late to pivot to Zoom. (And remember, Zoom was not a household term a year ago!). This year, save the date for a Virtual Independent Living Education Day - March 31, 2021 from 11 a.m. - noon. Sign up at masilc.org/independent-living-education-day.

Our 2021 focus is on increasing the state wide Independent Living budget to \$8 million. Read the details below.

It has been a very tough year for everyone, and especially for people with disabilities. We are at higher risk of severe or fatal Covid-19 infections, transportation has held higher risks, doctor appointments are difficult, and the vaccine has not been easy to schedule or get. Nursing homes and other congregate settings for people with disabilities have had horrible Covid-19 outcomes. And the isolation for many people with disabilities has caused depression and other mental health issues.

Has anything improved? In spite of forums outlining the difficulties, especially by Disability Advocates Advancing our Healthcare Rights (DAAHR), and in spite of the vaccine for people now being available to people with two or more risk factors (why isn't one enough?), it is extremely difficult to schedule a shot. Transportation, technology and other barriers remain for many people. We

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MWCIL is ready to work with you on any important issues. We will resolve as much as possible remotely to protect both our staff and consumers. We understand that most services and safety nets have been disrupted, and we will try to help.

Paul Spooner,
Executive Director

Independent Living Centers Request Funding Increase

Massachusetts IL Centers need more state funding in order to meet increasing demands for services. We have met many of the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic and predict that the need for services will skyrocket once in-person contact returns.

Specifically we are asking that the **FY' 2022 State Budget Item 4120-0200 be increased to \$8 million for the 10 IL Centers.**

Listed below are some of the expenses and services that will be increasing in 2022 if not sooner:

- **Nursing Home Transitions**—Covid-19 has brought the horrors of nursing homes into the daylight. We will save the state money, save lives and improve quality of lives by assisting nursing home residents to return to their community.
- **Increased Poverty**—People with disabilities are more commonly low-income than other groups, and the pandemic has exacerbated their employment opportunities. More than ever, they need IL knowledge and resources to be able to stay in their homes independently.
- **Increased Mental Illness**—The pandemic has also exacerbated depression and other mental health issues at the same time that treatment and services have been reduced. We expect that it will take a while for this back log to improve.
- **Students**, especially those in special education, could lose a year of

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- **Outreach** has been the biggest challenge during the pandemic. IL Centers will need to play catch-up. Outreach will need more funding to find those people who have fallen through the cracks.
- **Aging**—As “baby boomers” continue to age, they will acquire more disabilities.

[Download the 2021 IL Funding Increase pdf flyer](#) and please contact your legislators. Sign up for IL Education Day and tell your legislator about line item 4120-0200.

Independent Living Education Day

March 31, 2021 at 11 a.m.

Please contact your state senator and state representative and ask them to attend, and to talk with you about the importance of Independent Living. You can find legislator contact information at <https://malegislature.gov/Legislators>. (To find out who your legislators are, visit <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/WhereDoIVoteMA/bal/MyElectionInfo.aspx>.)

Independent Living Centers are anticipating an increased demand for services as the pandemic eases. We are asking that Budget Line Item 4120-0200 be increased to \$8 million, shared among the 10 IL Centers. Download the flyer, [2021-IL-Funding.pdf](#), for more information.

About the Event:

Virtual Event: [March 31, 2021 11:00AM to 12:00PM](#)

Join us for the first Virtual Independent Living Education Day!

Independent Living Education Day will showcase stories of Independent Living from across Massachusetts.

Massachusetts has 10 Centers for Independent Living, which together serve all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The last year has been challenging. Independent Living Centers have risen to that challenge,

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CART, ASL and Spanish interpretation have been requested. For questions about the event or to confirm accommodations contact sadie@masilc.org or 508-620-7452.

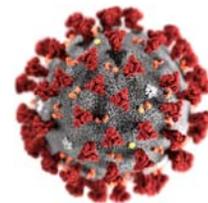
To register: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/independent-living-education-day-tickets-137489487759>



Covid-19

Vaccines Massachusetts

Massachusetts now has a pre-registration sign up available to all residents, regardless of eligibility. Appointments will be scheduled once a person is eligible. This new signup is accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/covid-19-vaccine>. Initially, the new signup will be for only 7 of the mass vaccination sites, with plans to add more sites soon. These sites are:



- Springfield, Eastfield Mall
- Natick, Natick Mall

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- Boston, Fenway Park (through 3/27) and Hynes Convention Center (starting 3/18)
- Roxbury, Reggie Lewis Center
- Dartmouth, Former Circuit City

[Channel 10 Boston](#) has more details on Governor Baker's latest vaccine announcements.

Intellectual Disability Among Greatest COVID-19 Risk Factors, Study Finds

by Shaun Heasley at [DisabilityScoop.com](#), March 10, 2021

"New research suggests that people with intellectual disability are about six times more likely to die if they contract COVID-19, a higher risk than almost anyone else.

A review of 64 million medical records from individuals seen by 547 health care organizations across the U.S. between January 2019 and November 2020 finds that intellectual disability is the greatest risk factor — other than old age — associated with COVID-19 deaths.

"The chances of dying from COVID-19 are higher for those with intellectual disability than they are for people with congestive heart failure, kidney disease or lung disease," said Jonathan Gleason, chief quality officer at Jefferson Health in Philadelphia and the lead author of the [study](#) published this month in the New England Journal of Medicine Catalyst."

Read the rest of the article at [DisabilityScoop.com](#). While Down Syndrome is listed as one (you need two) risk factor in MA, intellectual disability is not.

The American Rescue Plan

The \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan was signed by President Biden on Thursday, March 11. For information on what's in the bill, read this NPR story: [Here's What's In The American Rescue Plan](#). We have listed some highlights below.

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will get \$2,800. There will also be \$1,400 tacked on for each dependent in the household. Included in this package, Massachusetts will be receiving over \$8 billion from the Coronavirus State and Local Relief Fund."

The bill extends unemployment benefits through Labor Day at \$300 a week.

Passage of the American Rescue Plan Marks Victory for Disability Community

From the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD):

"One year after the COVID-19 pandemic began, Congress has passed and the President has signed into law a critical pandemic relief package with funding that will specifically benefit people with disabilities and help our communities survive

The American Rescue Plan includes nearly \$13 billion in funding for home and community based services (HCBS), as well as other critical funding and provisions that our communities have desperately needed. This funding will make it possible for more people with disabilities to live independently in their homes and receive needed support in community, rather than institutions that have become even more deadly during the pandemic. The American Rescue Plan also importantly includes adult dependents in COVID relief stimulus payments, which will ensure that people with disabilities are not excluded from this critical financial relief. Additionally, this COVID-19 relief bill includes many other provisions that will support all Americans, including people with disabilities, surviving the rest of the pandemic.

The American Rescue Plan includes extensions of tax credits and public assistance increases that are critical to enable Americans to weather this economic and health crisis, and so much more. At a time when access to affordable healthcare could not be more important, the new law also bolsters the Affordable Care Act and improves affordability of the healthcare marketplace through expanding and extending available subsidies. The American Rescue Plan also includes \$4 billion in funding for programs that provide mental health services and supports, including greater support for mobile crisis units and for children's mental health programs. Importantly, the plan provides \$3 billion for programs under the Individuals with Disabilities

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Voting Updates

To stay informed about disability voting, both locally, state wide and nationally, check in at [RevupMa.org](https://www.revupma.org) or visit their [Facebook page](#). We are living in interesting times, where the very premise of elections and democracy is being questioned and attacked.

AAPC Webinar - The Disability Vote in 2020

Webinar: Thursday, March 18 at 1:00 pm

Register: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_3cE1ntNEThSqlErFcoPZWg

Learn about the newest data on how people with disabilities voted in 2020, and what barriers continue to create a gap in voter turnout between people with and without disabilities. Research from Rutgers University will be shared by Dr. Lisa Shur and Dr. Doug Kruse. Dr. Schur and Dr. Kruse's research on the disability vote in 2020 was commissioned and supported by the [Election Assistance Commission](#) (EAC).

Executive Order on Promoting Access to Voting

Read the entire Executive Order at [whitehouse.gov](https://www.whitehouse.gov).

Section 7. Ensuring Equal Access for Voters with Disabilities. Within 270 days of the date of this order, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) within the Department of Commerce shall evaluate the steps needed to ensure that the online Federal Voter Registration Form is accessible to people with disabilities. During that period, NIST, in consultation with the Department of Justice, the Election Assistance Commission, and other agencies, as appropriate, shall also analyze barriers to private and independent voting for people with disabilities, including access to voter registration, voting technology, voting by mail, polling locations, and poll worker training. By the end of the 270-day period, NIST shall publish recommendations regarding both the Federal Voter Registration Form and the other barriers it has identified.

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While not disability specific, this report from [nonprofitvote.org](https://www.nonprofitvote.org) relates policies on early and mail-in voting, as well as same day registration, to state-specific voter turnout. Read the report at <https://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2021/03/america-goes-polls-2020.pdf>.

Massachusetts was rated 14th in turnout. Unfortunately, many of the 2020 voting policies are temporary and pandemic based. There are several state voting bills in-progress. Some states simply mail all voters a ballot, rather than mailing out applications which MA did in 2020. MA does not have same day registration. MA also required returning the ballot in an inner and outer envelope, which NonProfit Vote says is unnecessary and can result in rejected ballots when people forget an envelope.

Not mentioned in the report is the inability of some voters to fill out a paper ballot. MA has begun addressing this, a hasty last minute solution was offered last November, but more work needs to be done to make this a permanent feature of all MA elections.

A webinar on this report ended with the thought that the most effective way to increase voter turnout would be to change presidential elections to the popular vote. This would make all states "battleground" states, which was also cited as a factor in high turnout.

Crip Camp Gets Oscar Nomination!

A well deserved Oscar Nomination for Best Documentary Film has gone to Crip Camp.

From YouTube: "On the heels of Woodstock, a group of teen campers are inspired to join the fight for disability civil rights. This spirited look at grassroots activism is executive produced by President Barack Obama and Michelle Obama."

CBS News recently reported on the movie: [CRIP CAMP: A DISABILITY REVOLUTION](#).

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[/watch?v=OFS8SpwioZ4&t=5623s](#) or on NetFlix.

We highly recommend watching Crip Camp!

'Comedy is a wall breaker' for letting people with disabilities be themselves

Check out this article from cnet.com about Shannon DeVido and her approach to comedy. ""Disability is such a hot, weird topic. People don't really know what -- 'Can I talk to you?' and 'I don't know what to say or what to do.' That's totally human nature, and I'm never offended by that, but I think that using comedy in a way that allows you to start that conversation is such a unique and important way to do it."

Partner Websites and Organizations



[REV UP Massachusetts](#) - Increasing the Disability Vote!

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[MA Tales of Independence](#) - a collection of videos by people who are successfully living independently.



[Dignity Alliance of Massachusetts](#) is dedicated to secure fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support, and care.

About MetroWest Center for Independent Living

We provide an array of independent living services that enable people with disabilities to live in the community. The center was created by people with disabilities seeking full integration into society. We empower people with disabilities by teaching the practical skills and confidence to take control over their lives and become active members of the communities in which they live. We promote access and change within society while advocating for programs and services needed by people of all ages with a wide range of disabilities. MWCIL is a consumer-controlled, community-based, cross-disability, nonresidential private nonprofit agency.

We enable people with disabilities to gain freedom from nursing homes and other institutional settings.

If you have a disability, live within our area (26 towns in Metrowest section of Massachusetts) and have needs, goals, or barriers related to your living

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MetroWest Center for Independent Living is a scent-free environment. Please keep this in mind when you plan a visit.

[View our Services](#)



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