

## Aging and Disability Support at the Federal Level



Photo courtesy of Al Schreitmueller

During April 2012, the Administration on Community Living (ACL) was formed to combine and minimize efforts on behalf of Aging and Developmental Disabilities. As levels of care and social service supports have improved, people are living older and acquiring disabilities and those with disabilities are living longer. At some point the needs of these populations meet each other and become very similar. Bringing them under a coordinating agency just made sense. As of July, 2014, the agency also includes the Office of Disability. ACL is charged with working with states, tribes, community providers, universities, nonprofit organizations, businesses and families to help seniors and people with disabilities live in their homes and fully participate in their communities.

Home and Community Based Services (HCBS), where appropriate are extremely cost effective for consumers and government. But the key benefit is the increase in consumer satisfaction. Most people want to remain in their own homes as long as they can.

Examples of HCBS include Adult day care, adult day health care, home delivered meals and meals at senior centers, home health aide, home modifications, housekeeping, personal assistance, personal care, respiratory therapy, respite care, transportation and visiting nurse.

One of the key ways that ACL helps consumers manage HCBS is by supporting local Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRCs) and Centers for Independent Living (CILs). Consumers can learn about services which may be available and what benefits they provide. They may be able to find providers of those services and the ADRC may be able to help them determine eligibility for financial assistance for specific service programs. CILs are generally designed for very independent consumers who know what they need and simply want to connect with resources. CILs are more disability oriented and are often staffed with persons with disabilities to better connect with their consumers. Many states also have Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), which may offer a mix of information and referral, care planning and care management, typically to those 60 and over. Other specialized resources may be available to tribal members and US Veterans.

The Administration for Community Living (ACL) Mission Statement is: *Maximize the independence and health of older adults, people with disabilities, and their families and caregivers.*

The stated sub-goals include:

1. **Advocacy**  
Represent the needs and voices of the people to ensure that the interests of those with disabilities, older adults, their families and caregivers are implemented in the designs of public policy and programs.
2. **Protect Rights and Prevent Abuse**  
Identify and strengthen programs that impact the rights and prevent abuse, neglect and exploitation of older adults and those with disabilities. This includes prompting awareness of an access to support to exercise rights and protections.
3. **Protect Individual Self-Determination and Control**  
Enable older adults and people with disabilities to make informed decisions, and exercise self-determination and control regarding their own independence, health and well-being.
4. **Enable Long Term Services and Supports**  
Enable older adults and those with disabilities to remain in their communities by enhancing awareness of and access to high quality health and long-term care services and supports.
5. **Implement Effective and Responsive Management**  
Invest in the Aging Network - those agencies that consumers come to for advice including State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging and CILs. Attract, retain and develop personnel who with effectively accomplish goals 1 through 4 above, and provide them the tools and technologies to leverage their skills.