

STATE PLAN FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (SPIL)

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended, Chapter 1, Title VII

PART B - INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

Part C - Centers for Independent Living

State:

FISCAL YEARS: 2025-2027

Effective Date: October 1, 2024

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Executive Summary

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) (DSE), through the Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP), serves to improve the quality of life and independence of Mississippians with significant disabilities by providing comprehensive Independent Living Services on a statewide basis. It is the intent of MDRS to increase the availability of Independent Living Services across the State through the implementation of the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL).

Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE) of Mississippi (CIL) is dedicated to the empowerment of individuals with disabilities. LIFE's goal is to assist individuals with disabilities, of any age and any type of disability, in their efforts to live independently in their own homes and communities through the provision of a variety of Independent Living Services, particularly the five core services of information and referral, skills training, peer support, advocacy, and transition services from institutionalization back into the community and transition services for children and youth with disabilities.

The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) Independent Living Rehabilitation Program represented as the Designated State Entity (DSE) and the Centers for Independent Living, LIFE, Inc., will report to the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) on a quarterly basis.

Written reports are requested, including statistical information (when available), regarding consumers served during that quarter. At the end of each fiscal year, the DSE and the Centers for Independent Living will provide the SILC with copies of the 704 Report for that year. Progress and issues relative to the achievement of the goals and objectives outlined in the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) will be the primary focus of these reports.

The Statewide Independent Living Council Program Evaluation Subcommittee, composed of SILC members, will implement and monitor the Goals, Objectives and Indicators through the Evaluation Plan. Members of this Subcommittee will not be employed by the DSE or CIL Programs. Both organizations will have input into the development of the Evaluation Plan through their SILC membership.

The Evaluation Subcommittee will review SPIL objectives quarterly. Consumer Satisfaction Surveys from both the DSE and the CILs will be incorporated into the yearly reports and will be utilized to focus on the needs of the program. The implemented Evaluation Plan will also contain an assessment of satisfaction of individuals with disabilities who have received DSE and/or CIL Services.

Section 1: Goals, Objectives and Activities

1.1 Mission:

The overall mission of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS), Living Independence for Everyone, Inc. (LIFE), is to improve the quality of life and independence of Mississippians with significant disabilities by providing comprehensive, consumer controlled and directed Independent Living Services on a statewide basis. This is accomplished through promoting policies, programs and activities to maximize independence of people with disabilities.

1.2 Goals:

- 1.2.1 Improve quality of life and independence of Mississippians with disabilities.
- 1.2.2 Ensure access to disability specific planning and preparedness resources for Mississippians with disabilities.
- 1.2.3 Facilitate the transition of persons with significant disabilities who choose to reside in the least restrictive community environment.
- 1.2.4 Improve access and resources to Mississippians with disabilities that are available through the Centers for Independent Living and SILC.
- 1.2.5 Improve access and resources to the unserved/underserved populations.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.1 Provide quality Independent Living Services to individuals with disabilities in Mississippi. MDRS will continue to provide Chapter 1, Part B and Chapter 2 services.
- 1.2 LIFE will continue to provide the core Independent Living Services.
- 1.3 The SILC will hold public forums and advertise SILC meeting as necessary in order to gain input from stakeholders through public comments.
- 2.1 Identify and/or implement online materials for use by LIFE or other service providers to educate Mississippians with disabilities about being prepared in a disaster.
- 2.2 Collaborate with federal, state, and local agencies to coordinate, educate and conduct outreach efforts regarding emergency preparedness.
- 2.3 Promote Independent Living participation in local and state emergency planning, preparedness and response activities such as work groups and task forces developed to address emergency management and response.
- 3.1 Individuals with disabilities have access to community-based resources.
- 4.1 The SILC and LIFE will attempt to strengthen the public's knowledge of Independent Living, Independent Living Services, and awareness of disability issues.
- 4.2 LIFE will work towards increasing Independent Living funding to increase capacity to provide IL services.
- 5.1 LIFE services are available in 82 counties.
- 5.2 Hispanic individuals with disabilities have access to LIFE services.

Indicators:

- 1.1 DSE will serve up to 5000 Mississippians with disabilities annually.
- 1.2 LIFE will serve up to 1500 Mississippians with disabilities annually.
- 2.1 LIFE will provide community workshops and other training opportunities for persons with disabilities to be prepared in the case of an emergency.
- 2.2 LIFE will meet and collaborate with community leaders to advocate for accessible shelters.
- 3.1 DSE will transition up to 25 persons with disabilities annually to be served on the home and community-based waiver program.
- 3.2 LIFE will continue to transition persons with disabilities annually.
- 4.1 SILC and LIFE will identify, promote and sponsor consumer involvement in state and local training, conferences, workshops, recreational activities and seminars that are no cost to the participant.
- 4.2 LIFE will research sources and seek additional funding to expand IL services, focusing on the underserved population.
- 5.1 LIFE provides services to Mississippians with disabilities in 82 counties.
- 5.2 All LIFE materials are available in Spanish and Spanish speaking interpreters can be available upon request.

1.4 Evaluation

Methods and processes the SILC will use to evaluate the effectiveness of the SPIL including timelines and evaluation of satisfaction of individuals with disabilities.

Timeline	Goals (copy from section 1.2 above)	Objectives (copy from section 1.3 above)	Data to be collected	Data collection method	Organization primarily responsible for data collection (please check as many as apply)
<i>Throughout 3-year period</i>	Improve quality of life and independence of Mississippians	1.1 Provide quality Independent Living Services to individuals with	Number of cases opened/served by DSE. Including satisfaction of services.	Quarterly Report to SILC.	○ DSE

	with disabilities.	<p>disabilities in Mississippi. MDRS will continue to provide Chapter 1, Part B and Chapter 2 services.</p> <p>1.2 LIFE will continue to provide the core Independent Living Services.</p> <p>1.3The SILC will hold public forums and advertise SILC meeting as necessary in order to gain input from stakeholders through public comments.</p>	<p>Number of cases opened/served by LIFE.</p> <p>Number of SILC meetings held and public comments received and addressed by SILC.</p>	<p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p> <p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>CIL</i> ○ <i>SILC</i>
<i>Throughout 3 year period</i>	Ensure access to disability specific planning and preparedness resources for Mississippians with disabilities.	<p>2.1 Identify and/or implement online materials for use by LIFE or other service providers to educate Mississippians with disabilities about being</p>	Number of online visitors to LIFE’s website or number of requests made for brochures, services etc.	Quarterly Report to SILC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>CIL</i>

		prepared in a disaster.			
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		<p>2.2 Collaborate with federal, state, and local agencies to coordinate, educate and conduct outreach efforts regarding emergency preparedness.</p> <p>2.3 Promote Independent Living participation in local and state emergency planning, preparedness and response activities such as work groups and task forces developed to address emergency management and response.</p>	<p>Number of trainings conducted by LIFE staff on emergency preparedness and their satisfaction with the services.</p> <p>Work group or task force developed to address emergency management and response.</p>	<p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p> <p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>CIL</i> ○ <i>CIL</i>
<i>Throughout 3 year period</i>	Facilitate the transition of persons with significant disabilities who choose to reside in the least restrictive community environment.	3.1 Individuals with disabilities have access to community based resources.	Number of persons transitioned to the IL or TBI/SCI home and community based waiver program.	Quarterly Report to SILC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>DSE</i>
<i>Throughout 3 year period</i>	Improve access and resources to Mississippians	4.1 The SILC and LIFE will attempt to strengthen the	Number of Health Fairs, webinars, SILC training	Quarterly Report to SILC.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>CIL</i> ○ <i>DSE</i> ○ <i>SILC</i>

	<p>with disabilities that are available through the Centers for Independent Living.</p>	<p>public's knowledge of Independent Living, Independent Living Services, and awareness of disability issues.</p> <p>4.2 LIFE will work towards increasing Independent Living funding to increase capacity to provide IL services.</p>	<p>and other community trainings participated in.</p> <p>Number of fundraisers completed by LIFE.</p>	<p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p>	<p>○ CIL</p>
<p>Throughout 3 year period</p>	<p>Improve access and resources to the unserved/underserved populations.</p>	<p>5.1 LIFE services are available in 82 counties.</p>	<p>Number of individuals served by county.</p>	<p>Quarterly Report to SILC.</p>	<p>○ CIL</p>
		<p>5.2 Hispanic individuals with disabilities have access to LIFE services.</p>	<p>Number of materials requested, and number of interpreters requested.</p>	<p>Quarterly Report to SILC</p>	<p>○ CIL</p>

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1.5 Financial Plan

Sources, uses of, and efforts to coordinate funding to be used to accomplish the Goals and Objectives. Process for grants/contracts, selection of grantees, and distribution of funds to facilitate effective operations and provision of services.

Fiscal Year(s): FY2024-2026					
Sources	Projected Funding Amounts and Uses				
	SILC Resource Plan	IL Services	General CIL Operations	Other SPIL Activities	Retained by DSE for Administrative costs (applies only to Part B funding)
Title VII Funds					
Chapter 1, Part B		348060			
Chapter 1, Part C			941295		
Other Federal Funds					
Sec. 101(a)(18) of the Act (Innovation and Expansion shall not be \$0)	19337				
Social Security Reimbursement					
Other					
Non-Federal Funds Part B State Match					
Other State Match for Funds in SPIL		38674			
State Funds					
Other					

Narrative Section

Description of financial plan narrative.

MDRS will utilize Part B funds to provide direct services to individuals with disabilities. LIFE will utilize Part C funds to provide the 5 core services to individuals with disabilities. MDRS will utilize Chapter 2 funds to provide services to eligible individuals with blindness.

As described in the 1.5 Financial Plan Tables Title VII funds will be utilized by the MDRS (DSE) to provide Independent Living Services to individuals with significant disabilities as indicated in Table 2.1A(1): Independent Living Services. These services include, but are not limited to the following: information and referral services, mobility training, rehabilitation technology services, environmental accessibility, personal care attendant services, case management services, and limited other IL purchased services.

LIFE (CIL) will utilize Chapter 1, Part C, funds to provide core Independent Living Services and other IL Services as indicated in Table 2.1A(1): Independent Living Services.

MDRS will provide funding to support the Resource Plan for the SILC utilizing Innovation and Expansion funds in order to conduct SILC business and necessary SILC functions, including one part-time position.

MDRS will continue to provide support services: meeting rooms, printing, copying, brailing, recording, transcribing, use of office equipment, use of telephones, interpreter services, and technical assistance.

Section 2: Scope, Extent, and Arrangements of Services

2.1 Services

Services to be provided to persons with disabilities that promote full access to community life including geographic scope, determination of eligibility, and statewide reach.

Table 2.1A: Independent living services	Provided using Part B (check to indicate yes)	Provided using other funds (check to indicate yes; do not list the other funds)	Entity that provides (specify CIL, DSE, or the other entity)
Core Independent Living Services, as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information and referral - Individual and systems advocacy - Peer counseling - IL skills training - Transition services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Transition from nursing homes & other institutions ▪ Diversion from institutions ▪ Transition of youth (who were eligible for an IEP) to post-secondary life 	X		CIL
	X		CIL
	X		CIL
	X		CIL
	X		CIL
	X		CIL
Counseling services, including psychological, psychotherapeutic, and related services	X		DSE
Services related to securing housing or shelter, including services related to community group living, and supportive of the purposes of this Act and of the titles of this Act, and adaptive housing services (including appropriate accommodations to and modifications of any space used to serve, or occupied by, individuals with disabilities) Note: CILs are not allowed to own or operate housing.	X		CIL DSE
Rehabilitation technology	X		DSE
Mobility training	X		DSE
Services and training for individuals with cognitive and sensory disabilities, including life skills training, and interpreter and reader services	X		CIL DSE
Personal assistance services, including attendant care and the training of personnel providing such services	X		DSE
Surveys, directories, and other activities to identify appropriate housing, recreation opportunities, and accessible transportation, and other support services			

Table 2.1A: Independent living services	Provided using Part B (check to indicate yes)	Provided using other funds (check to indicate yes; do not list the other funds)	Entity that provides (specify CIL, DSE, or the other entity)
Consumer information programs on rehabilitation and IL services available under this Act, especially for minorities and other individuals with disabilities who have traditionally been unserved or underserved by programs under this Act	X		CIL DSE
Education and training necessary for living in the community and participating in community activities	X		CIL DSE
Supported living			
Transportation, including referral and assistance for such transportation			CIL
Physical rehabilitation			
Therapeutic treatment			
Provision of needed prostheses and other appliances and devices	X		DSE
Individual and group social and recreational services			CIL
Training to develop skills specifically designed for youths who are individuals with significant disabilities to promote self-awareness and esteem, develop advocacy and self-empowerment skills, and explore career options	X		CIL
Services for children	X		CIL DSE
Services under other Federal, State, or local programs designed to provide resources, training, counseling, or other assistance, of substantial benefit in enhancing the independence, productivity, and quality of life of individuals with disabilities	X		CIL DSE
Appropriate preventive services to decrease the need of individuals with significant disabilities for similar services in the future	X		CIL DSE
Community awareness programs to enhance the understanding and integration into society of individuals with disabilities	X		CIL DES
Such other services as may be necessary and not inconsistent with the Act	X		DSE CIL

2.2 Outreach to Unserved and Underserved Populations

Identify steps to be taken regarding statewide outreach to populations that are unserved or underserved by programs that are funded under Title VII, including minority groups and urban and rural populations and how outreach will be conducted to address equity.

Mississippi continues to be a State with broad social economic and ethnic diversity. The rural nature of this State and the diversity of the population present challenges for developing programs and policies that will result in inclusion for all groups and geographical areas.

Members of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians who have significant disabilities continue to be an underserved population due to mistrust of service providers outside of the Tribe. This fact is coupled with language and cultural differences. Because of this, the State and the CIL both maintain various formal and informal cooperative agreements and memorandums of understanding with public and private agencies. These agreements promote cooperation and coordination of programs and services. This approach results in a network of resources for Mississippians with significant disabilities. Public relations activities assist the State and the CIL in assuring that information and referral procedures are disseminated to professionals and other interested individuals. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services continues to implement an on-going Cultural Diversity Initiative that includes outreach to underserved and underrepresented groups training for personnel and public awareness activities. LIFE makes every effort to provide services to Native American, Hispanic, Vietnamese, and other ethnically diverse populations. In order to assure public access to services both MDRS and LIFE maintain a network of offices and/or community rehabilitation facilities that are strategically located across the State. Due to the growth in Home and Community Based Waiver Programs, MDRS has added additional Case Managers across the state to improve its ability to provide services to more individuals with significant disabilities. The additional staff will have a direct impact on the outreach and number of individuals provided services in unserved and underserved populations and minority groups.

The Office for Independent Living funded under Title VII Part C, is operated by Living Independence for Everyone, (LIFE) of Mississippi Inc. LIFE has office locations in Tupelo, Indianola, McComb, Hattiesburg, Biloxi, and Jackson (state office). These offices are strategically located in areas of the state to provide access to as many Mississippians with disabilities as possible including those un-served and underserved populations. LIFE offers the five core Independent Living Services of information and referral, peer support, skills training, individual as well as systems advocacy, and transition services, from institutionalization back into the community, and transition services for children and youth with disabilities. LIFE also offers a variety of other Independent Living Services such as service coordination for all individuals with disabilities and the purchase of services when funding is available through fund raising efforts or third party payments and more. LIFE will continue to conduct a Consumer Satisfaction Survey each year to seek consumer input and assess areas of need. Information from the Consumer Satisfaction Survey is used to assist the LIFE Board of Trustees and staff to determine improvements needed in service provision and if there needs to be an increase in efforts in the areas of outreach, advocacy, community education, and awareness.

The core Independent Living Services will continue to be provided to individuals with significant disabilities under the age of 24. In addition, LIFE staff will continue to make referrals to other source such as the State Independent Living Program, and seek out new referral sources through 2027;

LIFE will continue to provide the core Independent Living Services to individuals of both male and female, in proportion to the State's population.

Services will continue to be provided proportionally to individuals from all racial groups. LIFE will make every effort to improve our outreach to un-served and underserved populations in North, Central, and South Mississippi. Board and staff member development training will focus on outreach to underserved populations as well.

Services will continue to be provided proportionately to individuals of all ages.

The services offered by LIFE are advertised through all available and applicable media and information dissemination resources (e.g., local newspapers, consumer/advocacy group newsletters, meetings, and conferences.) LIFE will continue to be featured in other advocacy and consumer organizations newsletters and promote LIFE through the media during the year. LIFE staff will make every effort to participate in conferences and meetings targeting the disability population in Mississippi.

Special outreach efforts continue to be utilized to reach underrepresented groups. LIFE will continue to provide brochures and social media outreach efforts targeting Hispanic, Vietnamese, and Native American populations. LIFE staff will participate in conferences and meetings targeting these populations and attempt to develop Board and staff membership from the underserved populations. The Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services has offices located throughout the entire state. This allows the State to provide services to all areas and individuals. The SILC is mandated to include at least one representative of the Director of the 121 Project. Through this mandatory membership, the 121 Project is able to make the SILC aware of the Independent Living needs of members of the MBCI who have significant disabilities.

2.3 Coordination

Plans for coordination of services and cooperation among programs and organizations that support community life for persons with disabilities.

The SILC, LIFE and MDRS will maintain a clear understanding of the responsibilities of each entity. All programs are represented in the membership of the SILC and participate in SILC activities. The SILC will assist in the development of standardized referral procedures for all service providers in an effort to enhance coordination. The State Independent Living Programs will periodically report to the SILC on progress toward achieving the specified objectives of the SPIL.

MDRS and LIFE maintain formal and informal cooperative agreements with numerous public and private agencies. Several of these agencies are represented in the SILC membership. The Chairperson of the SILC is a member of the Rehabilitation Advisory Council. Efforts will be made to increase SILC representation on other Councils

determined to be appropriate by the SILC.

Services under Chapter 1 are provided after the use of comparable or similar benefits. Services will be coordinated with all available resources to avoid unnecessary duplication. The State IL Programs utilize available technology to identify unnecessary duplications. The SILC supports all efforts to avoid unnecessary duplication of services. The State utilizes Federal and State funding to coordinate an array of Independent Living Services. MDRS will attempt to make funds available to private entities to further coordinate efforts and avoid duplication. Other State and Federal funds are coordinated to enhance the availability of personal assistance services.

LIFE utilizes all available resources by coordinating service activities with various agencies. LIFE participates in various fund raising activities in order to access additional funds.

The State and the CIL maintain formal and informal cooperative agreements with many agencies. MDRS coordinates services and programs with the State Department of Mental Health through its IDD Waiver for individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities.

MDRS also coordinates with the Mississippi Division of Medicaid to provide services through the Division's Elderly and Disabled Waiver and its Assisted Living Waiver. Coordination is also achieved by efforts between MDRS and the DD Council to serve Mississippians with developmental disabilities.

The state also participates in the following boards and councils which meet monthly/quarterly or annually: TBI/SCI Advisory Council, Early Childhood Interagency Advisory Committee, Metro Area Home Health Advisory Committee, Interagency coordinating Council for Children and Youth, State Workforce Development Council, State Workforce Board, Jackson State University School of Social Work Advisory Council, Early Childhood Interagency Advisory Council, Developmental Disabilities Council, State Rehabilitation Council, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, National Organization of Rehabilitation Partners, Mississippi Brain Injury Association, National Council of State Administrators for the Blind, Regional Research and Training Center for Low Vision and Blindness Advisory Council, T.K. Martin Center for Assistive Technology Services Advisory Council, Preserve Sight Mississippi, MS Lions Eye and Tissue Bank and the Lions of MS Council of Governors, MS Association of Educators and Rehabilitators of the Blind and Visually Impaired (MAER), MS Library Commission Talking Book Services, Children's Services Task Force, Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Policy (formerly President's Committee on Employment for Disabilities, Mobility Planning Committee, Member of Planning Committee, Looking to the Future, State Level Case Review Team, State Advisory Committee for Special Education, Transitional Services for Children and Youth Task Force, Project VISSIONS, Where Do We Go From Here Transition Partnership, National Rehabilitation Association, Rehabilitation Association of Mississippi, Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR). LIFE staff and Board coordinate with and/or participate on the MS Paralysis Association, the Housing Advisory Council for the Institute for Disability Studies (University Affiliated Program), the Council on Developmental Disabilities, the ADA

Advisory Council for the City of Jackson, the Planning Council for the City of Hattiesburg, Southwest MS Rural Health Coalition, and many more.

The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians has initiated case sharing with the DSE and CIL when an individual's need is greater than the MBCI budget allows. The DSE and CIL also provide technical assistance to the MBCI IL Program Staff. The MBCI Program Staff, in turn, offer to provide technical assistance to DSE and CIL staff in the event that a Choctaw Tribal member is ever an applicant or consumer of their services, offering Choctaw language translation, and cultural interpretation in some cases.

MDRS and LIFE routinely share cases in order to maximize the benefits available to individuals with disabilities.

The six Independent Living Offices are strategically located within the ten Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (DSE) district areas so that all consumers have access to services regardless of location.

Outreach Activities and Coordination efforts with other service providers continue to be the two major components of the Older Blind Program. Each Independent Living Staff is encouraged to make a minimum of three monthly contacts per month to optometrists, ophthalmologists, home health agencies, retirement centers, libraries, human service agencies, churches, schools, civic groups, area agencies on aging and other civic entities that have direct contact with this underserved population of Mississippians, 55 years of age and older who live in rural areas.

In an effort to improve and expand community services and programs for Older Individuals who are Blind, the Independent Living Program continues to partner with Lions of Mississippi, Veterans Administration VIST (Visual Impairment Specialist Team) Program, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Area Agencies on Aging, Home Health Agencies, Community Rehabilitation Programs (Addie McBryde Center, and Ability Works), Civic groups, and other local entities. Through health fairs, visual acuity testing, and various trainings statewide, thousands of Mississippians who are blind and over the age 55 are receiving much needed educational information regarding blindness and available resources in the area.

The Older Blind Program continues to have a very active peer support group network. Groups meet statewide on a regular basis to discuss issues relating to vision loss, community awareness, prevention, advocacy, and social events. The ILB Instructor serves as a resource to the group.

Section 3: Network of Centers

3.1 Existing Centers

Current Centers for Independent Living including: legal name; geographic area and counties served; and source(s) of funding. Oversight process, by source of funds and oversight entity.

Legal Name	Counties Served	Funding Source's	Oversight process	Oversight Entity	SPIL Signatory (yes/no)
Living Independence For Everyone (LIFE)	All Mississippi 82 counties	Chapter 1, Part C;	PPR to ACL; Board of Directors	ACL/OILP	Yes

SPIL signatory, the Office for Independent Living funded under Title VII, Part C is operated by Living Independence for Everyone (LIFE) of Mississippi, Inc. LIFE has office locations in Tupelo, Indianola, McComb, Hattiesburg, Biloxi and Jackson (state office). These offices are strategically located in areas of the state to provide access to as many Mississippians with disabilities as possible, including those un-served and underserved populations. LIFE offers the five core Independent Living Services of information and referral, peer support, skills training, individual as well as systems advocacy, and transition services from institutionalization back into the community and transition services for children and youth with disabilities. LIFE also offers a variety of other Independent Living Services, such as service coordination and the purchase of services when funding is available through fund raising efforts or third party payments. LIFE will continue to conduct a Consumer Satisfaction Survey each year to seek consumer input and assess areas of need. Information from the Consumer Satisfaction Survey is used to assist the LIFE Board of Trustees and staff to determine improvements needed in service provision and if there needs to be an increase in efforts in the areas of outreach, advocacy, community education, and awareness.

3.2 Expansion and Adjustment of Network

- Plan and priorities for use of funds, by funding source, including Part B funds, Part C funds, State funds, and other funds, whether current, increased, or one-time funding, and methodology for distribution of funds, and use of funds to build capacity of existing Centers, establish new Centers, and/or increase statewide reach of Network.

The six Independent Living Offices are strategically located within the ten Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (DSE) district areas so that all consumers have access to services regardless of location.

Outreach Activities and Coordination efforts with other service providers continue to be the two major components of the Older Blind Program. Each Independent Living Staff is encouraged to make a minimum of three monthly contacts per month to optometrists, ophthalmologists, home health agencies, retirement centers, libraries, human service agencies, churches, schools, civic groups, area agencies on aging and other civic entities that have direct contact with this underserved population of Mississippians, 55 years of age and older who live in rural areas.

In an effort to improve and expand community services and programs for Older Individuals who are Blind, the Independent Living Program continues to partner with Lions of Mississippi, Veterans Administration VIST (Visual Impairment Specialist Team) Program, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Area Agencies on Aging, Home Health Agencies,

Community Rehabilitation Programs (Addie McBryde Center, and Ability Works), Civic groups, and other local entities. Through health fairs, visual acuity testing, and various trainings statewide, thousands of Mississippians who are blind and over the age 55 are receiving much needed educational information regarding blindness and available resources in the area.

The Older Blind Program continues to have a very active peer support group network. Groups meet statewide on a regular basis to discuss issues relating to vision loss, community awareness, prevention, advocacy, and social events. The ILB Instructor serves as a resource to the group.

Section 4: Designated State Entity

Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services will serve as the entity in Mississippi designated to receive, administer, and account for funds made available to the state under Title VII, Chapter 1, Part B of the Act on behalf of the State. (*Sec. 704(c)*)

4.1 DSE Responsibilities

- (1) receive, account for, and disburse funds received by the State under this chapter based on the plan;
- (2) provide administrative support services for a program under Part B, and a program under Part C in a case in which the program is administered by the State under section 723;
- (3) keep such records and afford such access to such records as the Administrator finds to be necessary with respect to the programs;
- (4) submit such additional information or provide such assurances as the Administrator may require with respect to the programs; and
- (5) retain not more than 5 percent of the funds received by the State for any fiscal year under Part B. for the performance of the services outlined in paragraphs (1) through (4).

4.2 Administration and Staffing: DSE Assurances Administrative and staffing support provided by the DSE.

MDRS has Case Managers located in offices throughout the state that are available to conduct and provide services to individuals with significant disabilities that are seeking IL Services.

MDRS has offices located in the following areas: Jackson, Brookhaven, Natchez, McComb, Hattiesburg, Gulfport, Gautier, Laurel, Meridian, Forest, Starkville, Louisville, Newton, Columbus, New Albany, Tupelo, Olive Branch, Oxford, Greenwood, Greenville, Cleveland, Corinth, Amory, Kosciusko, Philadelphia, Batesville, Clarksdale, Yazoo City, Grenada, Eupora, Vicksburg, Pearl, Picayune, Lucedale, and Columbia. Consumers may access IL Services or information and referral through contact with any of these offices.

4.3 State- Imposed Requirements

State-imposed requirements contained in the provisions of this SPIL including:

- State law, regulation, rule, or policy relating to the DSE’s administration, funding, or operation of IL programs, and/or establishment, funding, and operations of the SILC
- Rule or policy implementing any Federal law, regulation, or guideline that is beyond what would be required to comply with 45 CFR 1329
- That limits, expands, or alters requirements for the SPIL

The following codes are provided:

Mississippi Code Sections § 37-33-151; § 37-33-152; § 37-33-153; § 37-33-157; § 37-33-205; § 37-33-206; § 37-33-211; § 37-33-213.

4.4 Grant Process & Distribution of Funds

Grant processes, policies, and procedures to be followed by the DSE in the awarding of grants of Part B funds.

As described in the 1.5 Financial Plan Tables Title VII funds will be utilized by the MDRS (DSE) to provide Independent Living Services to individuals with significant disabilities as indicated in Table 2.1A(1): Independent Living Services. These services include, but are not limited to the following: information and referral services, mobility training, rehabilitation technology services, environmental accessibility, personal care attendant services, case management services, and limited other IL purchased services.

4.5 Oversight Process for Part B Funds

The oversight process to be followed by the DSE MDRS has an Office of Financial Management that ensures the proper disbursement of and accounting for funds made available through Part B and Chapter 2 of Title VII of the Act. From this Office, funds are distributed to the Office of Special Disability Programs and Independent Living for the Blind to provide Independent Living Services. The Office of Special Disability Programs and Independent Living for the Blind, through its Accessible Automated Case Environment (AACE) Budget Module, ensure that funds are disbursed to IL staff for purchased Independent Living Services. Audits are conducted to ensure compliance in the use of these funds.

LIFE’s Board of Trustees and accounting staff, with guidance and input from an accounting firm, have developed financial policies to ensure proper financial accountability. LIFE receives an independent audit annually in accordance with OMB circular A-133 and maintains all records required by the IRS as well as the MS Secretary of State’s office. Annual audits of all other grants and contracts are conducted by the grantor and in some cases the MS Secretary of State’s office as well.

4.6 722 vs. 723 State

Check one:

- 722 (if checked, will move to Section 5)
 723 (if checked, will move to Section 4.7)

4.7 723 States

Order of priorities for allocating funds amounts to Centers, agreed upon by the SILC and Centers, and any differences from 45 CFR 1329.21 & 1329.22.

How state policies, practices, and procedures governing the awarding of grants to Centers and oversight of the Centers are consistent with 45 CFR 1329.5, 1329.6, & 1329.22.

Section 5: Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

5.1 Establishment of SILC

How the SILC is established and SILC autonomy is assured.

The SILC is an autonomous Council with members appointed by the Governor. The members of the SILC elect a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer from among the members who will conduct the SILC meetings and Public Hearings in accordance with all applicable federal and state laws. Meetings will be held in a fully accessible location of the member's choice. The SILC Resource Plan is developed by the SILC members with input from the Director of the DSE and supports the objectives and activities outlined in the State Plan for Independent Living developed by the SILC membership.

5.2 SILC Resource plan

Resources (including necessary and sufficient funding, staff/administrative support, and in-kind), by funding source and amount, for SILC to fulfill all duties and authorities.

Process used to develop the Resource Plan.

Process for disbursement of funds to facilitate effective operations of SILC.

Justification if more than 30% of the Part B appropriation is to be used for the SILC Resource Plan.

MDRS will provide funding for SILC travel and related expenses incurred in conducting SILC meetings and other necessary SILC functions. MDRS will continue to provide the following support services: meeting rooms, printing and copying, brailing, recording and transcribing, use of office equipment, use of telephones, interpreter services, and technical assistance. MDRS will provide sufficient funding through the SILC Budget to conduct training and developmental activities for SILC members. This will be done in concert with training resources available through the CILS for joint training efforts.

Staff and other personnel assigned to the SILC through the Resource Plan will not be assigned duties that will result in a conflict of interest. The purpose of this support is to assist the SILC in carrying out its duties under the State Plan for Independent Living.

5.3 Maintenance of SILC

How State will maintain SILC over the course of the SPIL.¹

The SILC is an independent council working with the Mississippi Department Rehabilitation

Services (MDRS) and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), LIFE to increase the impact of independent living services in Mississippi. The SILC is composed of gubernatorial appointees who represent people with significant disabilities from across the state, as well as, the interests of other independent living programs and services.

Based on the SILC's composition as set forth in Subtitle H, Section 705 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014, members are chosen by the Governor of Mississippi, after receiving recommendations from organizations representing a broad range of individuals with disabilities, to serve three year terms, up to two consecutively. The Council consists of one CIL director, and ex officio (nonvoting) member to represent the DSE and other state agencies serving individuals with disabilities. The majority of voting members are individuals with disabilities, not employed by a CIL or state agency.

Members provide statewide representation to the Council, represent a broad range of individuals with disabilities from diverse backgrounds, and are knowledgeable about the CILs and independent living services.

As members are appointed by the Governor, all individuals interested in serving on the Council must apply for appointment through the SILC Nominating Committee. Resumes are required with the application.

The SILC Chairperson has the responsibility to inform the Governor about federal mandates regarding the composition of the Council. All reappointments must be submitted through the SILC Nominating Committee who shall submit nominations to the Governor's Office. SILC Council members and DSU staff shall avoid any actual or potential conflicts of interest when participating in meetings of the Council or when acting on behalf of the MS SILC.

SILC Council members and DSU staff shall disclose any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as actual, potential, or perceived conflict is known or reasonably should be known.

Individuals who are eligible to vote and whom have disclosed an actual or potential conflict of interest on a specific action being taken by the council, may not participate in any discussion, or vote on the action of said conflict. The individual may however answer specific questions put to him or her by the Council.

The SILC shall conduct its affairs so that no member of the SILC community shall derive private gain from his or her association with the Statewide Independent Living Council except as provided by explicit policies of the SILC.

SILC members and staff shall not participate in institutional decisions involving direct benefits such as appointments, promotions, salaries, leaves of absence or awards to members of their immediate families.

All council members and staff comply with the SILC *Policy on Conflicts of Interest and Member Code of Ethics*.

The SILC may hire one part-time hourly wage position (Administrative Assistant). The SILC updates the Employee Work Profile of the wage position, and provides ongoing guidance and yearly evaluation. Personnel records of all part time members are maintained by the Office of Special Disability Programs, a Unit of MDRS.

Support staff hired by the SILC will take assignment from the SILC Chairperson and will be housed in a location agreeable to and selected by the SILC members. Members will receive a quarterly update regarding tasks assigned and completed for the previous quarter. A job description is developed by the officers of the Council and approved by the members.

No assignment of duties will be made to SILC staff or other personnel made available by the DSE or any other State agency or office that will create a conflict of interest while assisting the SILC in carrying out its duties.

MDRS will provide funding for SILC travel and related expenses incurred in conducting SILC meetings and other necessary SILC functions. MDRS will continue to provide the following support services: meeting rooms, printing and copying, brailing, recording and transcribing, use of office equipment, use of telephones, interpreter services, and technical assistance. MDRS will provide sufficient funding through the SILC Budget to conduct training and developmental activities for SILC members. This will be done in concert with training resources available through the CILS for joint training efforts.

Staff and other personnel assigned to the SILC through the Resource Plan will not be assigned duties that will result in a conflict of interest. The purpose of this support is to assist the SILC in carrying out its duties under the State Plan for Independent Living.

Section 6: Legal Basis and Certifications

6.1 Designated State Entity (DSE)

The state entity/agency designated to receive and distribute funding, as directed by the SPIL, under Title VII, Part B of the Act is Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services. Authorized representative of the DSE Anita Naik Title Program Director, Office of Speical Disability Programs.

6.2 Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

The Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) that meets the requirements of section 705 of the Act and is authorized to perform the functions outlined in section 705(c) of the Act in the State is Mississippi Statewide Independent Living Council.

6.3 Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

The Centers for Independent Living (CILs) eligible to sign the SPIL, a minimum of 51% whom must sign prior to submission, are:

Living Independence For Everyone (LIFE)

6.4 Authorizations

6.4.a. The SILC is authorized to submit the SPIL to the Independent Living Administration, Administration for Community Living. Yes (Yes/No)

6.4.b. The SILC and CILs may legally carryout each provision of the SPIL. YES (Yes/No)

6.4.c. State/DSE operation and administration of the program is authorized by the SPIL. Yes (Yes/No)

Section 7: DSE Assurances

Anita Naik acting on behalf of the DSE Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services located at 1281 Highway 51, Madison, MS 39110, 601-853-5230, Anaik@mdrs.ms.gov *45 CFR 1329.11* assures that:

- 7.1. The DSE acknowledges its role on behalf of the State, as the fiscal intermediary to receive, account for, and disburse funds received by the State to support Independent Living Services in the state based on the plan;
- 7.2. The DSE will assure that the agency keeps appropriate records, in accordance with federal and state law, and provides access to records by the federal funding agency upon request;
- 7.3. The DSE will not retain more than 5 percent of the funds received by the State for any fiscal year under Part B for administrative expenses;¹
- 7.4. The DSE assures that the SILC is established as an autonomous entity within the state as required in *45 CFR 1329.14*;
- 7.5. The DSE will not interfere with the business or operations of the SILC that include but are not limited to:
 1. Expenditure of federal funds
 2. Meeting schedules and agendas
 3. SILC board business
 4. Voting actions of the SILC board
 5. Personnel actions
 6. Allowable travel
 7. Trainings

- 7.6. The DSE will abide by SILC determination of whether the SILC wants to utilize DSE staff:
1. If the SILC informs the DSE that the SILC wants to utilize DSE staff, the DSE assures that management of such staff with regard to activities and functions performed for the SILC is the sole responsibility of the SILC in accordance with Sec. 705(e)(3) of the Act (Sec. 705(e)(3), 29 U.S.C.796d(e)(3)).
- 7.7. The DSE will fully cooperate with the SILC in the nomination and appointment process for the SILC in the state;
- 7.8. The DSE shall make timely and prompt payments to Part B funded SILCs and CILs:
1. When the reimbursement method is used, the DSE must make a payment within 30 calendar days after receipt of the billing, unless the agency or pass-through entity reasonably believes the request to be improper;
 2. When necessary, the DSE will advance payments to Part B funded SILCs and CILs to cover its estimated disbursement needs for an initial period generally geared to the mutually agreed upon disbursing cycle; and
 3. The DSE will accept requests for advance payments and reimbursements at least monthly when electronic fund transfers are not used, and as often as necessary when electronic fund transfers are used, in accordance with the provisions of the Electronic Fund Transfer Act (15 U.S.C. 1693-1693r).

The signature below indicates this entity/agency's agreement to: serve as the DSE and fulfill all the responsibilities in Sec. 704(c) of the Act; affirm the State will comply with the aforementioned assurances during the three-year period of this SPIL; and develop, with the SILC, and ensure that the SILC resource plan is necessary and sufficient (in compliance with section 8, indicator (6) below) for the SILC to fulfill its statutory duties and authorities under Sec. 705(c) of the Act, consistent with the approved SPIL.¹

Anita Naik, Program Director, Office of Special Disability Programs
 Name and Title of DSE director/authorized representative

 Signature Date

Electronic signature may be used for the purposes of submission, but hard copy of signature must be kept on file by the SILC.

Section 8: Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) Assurances and Indicators of Minimum Compliance

8.1 Assurances

Mike Duke acting on behalf of the SILC, Mississippi Statewide Independent Living Council located at 1281 Highway 51, Madison, MS 39110, Mike.Duke@mpbonline.org, 601-432-6301 45 CFR 1329.14 assures that:

- (1) The SILC regularly (not less than annually) provides the appointing authority recommendations for eligible appointments;
- (2) The SILC is composed of the requisite members set forth in the Act;¹
- (3) The SILC terms of appointment adhere to the Act;¹
- (4) The SILC is not established as an entity within a state agency in accordance with 45 CFR Sec. 1329.14(b);
- (5) The SILC will make the determination of whether it wants to utilize DSE staff to carry out the functions of the SILC;
 - a. The SILC must inform the DSE if it chooses to utilize DSE staff;
 - b. The SILC assumes management and responsibility of such staff with regard to activities and functions performed for the SILC in accordance with the Act.¹
- (6) The SILC shall ensure all program activities are accessible to people with disabilities;
- (7) The State Plan shall provide assurances that the designated State entity, any other agency, office, or entity of the State will not interfere with operations of the SILC, except as provided by law and regulation and;
- (8) The SILC actively consults with unserved and underserved populations in urban and rural areas that include, indigenous populations as appropriate for State Plan development as described in Sec. 713(b)(7) the Act regarding Authorized Uses of Funds.¹

Section 8.2 Indicators of Minimum Compliance

Indicators of minimum compliance for Statewide Independent Living Councils (SILC) as required by the Rehabilitation Act (Section 706(b), 29 U.S.C. Sec 796d-1(b)), as amended and supported by 45 CFR 1329.14-1329.16; and Assurances for Designated State Entities (DSE) as permitted by Section 704(c)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. Sec. 796c(c)(4)), as amended.

(a) STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL INDICATORS. –

- (1) SILC written policies and procedures must include:
 - a. A method for recruiting members, reviewing applications, and regularly providing recommendations for eligible appointments to the appointing authority;
 - b. A method for identifying and resolving actual or potential disputes and conflicts of interest that are in compliance with State and federal law;
 - c. A process to hold public meetings and meet regularly as prescribed in 45 CFR 1329.15(a)(3);
 - d. A process and timelines for advance notice to the public of SILC meetings in compliance with State and federal law and 45 CFR 1329.15(a)(3);
 - e. A process and timeline for advance notice to the public for SILC “Executive Session” meetings, that are closed to the public, that follow applicable federal and State laws;
 - i. “Executive Session” meetings should be rare and only take place to discuss confidential SILC issues such as but not limited to staffing.

- ii. Agendas for “Executive Session” meetings must be made available to the public, although personal identifiable information regarding SILC staff shall not be included;
 - f. A process and timelines for the public to request reasonable accommodations to participate during a public Council meeting;
 - g. A method for developing, seeking and incorporating public input into, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating implementation of the State Plan as required in 45 CFR 1329.17; and
 - h. A process to verify centers for independent living are eligible to sign the State Plan in compliance with 45 CFR 1329.17(d)(2)(iii).
- (2) The SILC maintains regular communication with the appointing authority to ensure efficiency and timeliness of the appointment process.
- (3) The SILC maintains individual training plans for members that adhere to the SILC Training and Technical Assistance Center’s SILC training curriculum.
- (4) The SILC receives public input into the development of the State Plan for Independent Living in accordance with 45 CFR 1329.17(f) ensuring:
- a. Adequate documentation of the State Plan development process, including but not limited to, a written process setting forth how input will be gathered from the state’s centers for independent living and individuals with disabilities throughout the state, and the process for how the information collected is considered.
 - b. All meetings regarding State Plan development and review are open to the public and provides advance notice of such meetings in accordance with existing State and federal laws and 45 CFR 1329.17(f)(2)(i)-(ii);
 - c. Meetings seeking public input regarding the State Plan provides advance notice of such meetings in accordance with existing State and federal laws, and 45 CFR 1329.17(f)(2)(i);
 - d. Public meeting locations, where public input is being taken, are accessible to all people with disabilities, including, but not limited to:
 - i. proximity to public transportation,
 - ii. physical accessibility, and
 - iii. effective communication and accommodations that include auxiliary aids and services, necessary to make the meeting accessible to all people with disabilities.
 - e. Materials available electronically must be 508 compliant and, upon request, available in alternative and accessible format including other commonly spoken languages.
- (5) The SILC monitors, reviews and evaluates the State Plan in accordance with 45 CFR 1329.15(a)(2) ensuring:
- a. Timely identification of revisions needed due to any material change in State law, state organization, policy or agency operations that affect the administration of the State Plan approved by the Administration for Community Living.
- (6) The SILC State Plan resource plan includes:

- a. Sufficient funds received from:
 - i. Title VII, Part B funds;
 - 1. If the resource plan includes Title VII, Part B funds, the State Plan provides justification of the percentage of Part B funds to be used if the percentage exceeds 30 percent of Title VII, Part B funds received by the State;
 - ii. Funds for innovation and expansion activities under Sec. 101(a)(18) of the Act, 29 U.S.C. Sec. 721(a)(18), as applicable;
 - iii. Other public and private sources.
- b. The funds needed to support:
 - i. Staff/personnel;
 - ii. Operating expenses;
 - iii. Council compensation and expenses;
 - iv. Meeting expenses including meeting space, alternate formats, interpreters, and other accommodations;
 - v. Resources to attend and/or secure training and conferences for staff and council members and;
 - vi. Other costs as appropriate.

The signature below indicates the SILC’s agreement to comply with the aforementioned assurances and indicators:

Mike Duke
 Name of SILC chairperson

 Signature Date

Electronic signature may be used for the purposes of submission, but hard copy of signature must be kept on file by the SILC.

Section 9: Signatures

The signatures below are of the SILC chairperson and at least 51 percent of the directors of the centers for independent living listed in section 6.3. These signatures indicate that the Mississippi Statewide Independent Living Council and the centers for independent living in the state agree with and intend to fully implement this SPIL’s content. These signatures also indicate that this SPIL is complete and ready for submission to the Independent Living Administration, Administration for Community Living, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The effective date of this SPIL is October 1, 2024 (year)

 SIGNATURE OF SILC CHAIRPERSON DATE

Mike Duke

NAME OF SILC CHAIRPERSON

Living Independent For Everyone (LIFE)
NAME OF CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL)

SIGNATURE OF CIL DIRECTOR DATE

Roger Bullock
NAME OF CIL DIRECTOR

NAME OF CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL)

SIGNATURE OF CIL DIRECTOR DATE

NAME OF CIL DIRECTOR

NAME OF CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL)

SIGNATURE OF CIL DIRECTOR DATE

NAME OF CIL DIRECTOR

NAME OF CENTER FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING (CIL)

SIGNATURE OF CIL DIRECTOR DATE

NAME OF CIL DIRECTOR
(INSERT ADDITIONAL CILS AS NEEDED)

Electronic signatures may be used for the purposes of submission, but hard copy of signature must be kept on file by the SILC.

¹ 1329.17(d)(2)(iii)