



Stand Like a Rock

Independent Living Principles

“In matters of principle, stand like a rock.”

—Thomas Jefferson

Those who have a strong IL Philosophy also have a strong set of values. They generally believe that all people should have the same rights. They believe in the dignity and worth of all people. Independent living principles evolve from these values. A principle is a basic truth, or assumption, or even just a standard of behavior.

A list of principles that guide the independent living field might include the following:

- A commitment to civil rights, with no discrimination on the basis of disability.
- A consumer or customer is the best authority when purchasing a service or product and his or her wishes must be respected.
- All communities must assure that there is **equal access** and that activities must be fully accessible to all people with disabilities.
- All programs and services that are community-based must be physically located in a non-institutional setting in their community and be responsive to the needs identified by people with disabilities in that community.
- Individuals with disabilities are **not always “sick”** and may not require help from certified medical professionals for daily living.
- People learn and grow through **self-help**, discussing their needs, concerns, and issues with people who have had similar experiences
- Community-wide change activities, such as systemic **advocacy**, are needed to ensure that people with disabilities benefit from all that society has to offer.
- Programs and services must be **cross-disability** and stress the full equality and participation of all persons with disabilities, regardless of type or extent of disability.
- Architectural, communication and attitudinal **barrier removal** must occur to ensure that people are able to fully participate in their communities.
- The organizations best suited to support and assist individuals with disabilities must be **consumer controlled**.
- All persons must have access to **community-based living** and no person should be institutionalized on the basis of a disability.
- Peer supporters (people with disabilities) are the individuals best suited to support, assist, and guide people with disabilities.
- All people have a right to confidentiality and the right to receive assistance without sacrificing their privacy.