



Access to Independent Living

## Three Rivers Inc.

[www.threeriversinc.org](http://www.threeriversinc.org)

(785) 456-9915 voice TTY  
(785) 456-9923 FAX

PO Box 408, 408 Lincoln  
Wamego, KS 66547

### House Social Services Budget Committee Testimony Representative Bob Bethell, Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to address the importance of adequately funding Centers for Independent Living in Kansas. I am Audrey Schremmer-Philip, Executive Director of Three Rivers Inc.; a Center for Independent Living (CIL) based in Wamego. Three Rivers provides services in Wabaunsee, Pottawatomie, Geary, Riley, Clay, Nemaha, Washington, Marshal and Brown counties. In addition, Three Rivers receives a small Federal grant to provide services to Native Americans with disabilities in Northeast Kansas. To serve this broad area, Three Rivers maintains small offices in Manhattan, Clay Center, and Seneca and on the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation reservation. I am also a board member of the Kansas Association for Centers for Independent Living (KACIL). Centers for Independent Living provide five core services;

- Information and Referral
- Advocacy
- Peer Support
- Independent Living Skills Training
- Deinstitutionalization

These services are provided free of charge.

While we have a list of requests to support in the SRS budget, my testimony will concentrate on two components concerning CIL funding. First, a national study completed in 2000 determined that \$250,000 in base funding is necessary for CILs to provide these five core services that form the necessary infrastructure for community living for persons with disabilities.

Until Fiscal Year 2007, Three Rivers had the added challenge of providing these five core services throughout nine counties with a SRS grant totaling \$25,000. Out of this small grant, approximately \$21,000.00 was applied as a match for Vocational Rehabilitation Services to draw down Federal dollars funding vocational supports to persons with disabilities in Three Rivers' service area. The remaining \$4,000.00 was applied to the provision of the five core services. I can personally attest it's impossible to provide the five core services at this funding level.

Three Rivers and other Kansas CILS have received funding increases bringing us closer to the necessary base funding level. Three Rivers' current annual grant from SRS totals \$171, 000.00. I offer our sincerest gratitude as do the 200 Kansans who received services thanks to this additional funding. This funding also enables us to fully participate in the Money Follows the Person transition teams being created later this year to assist individuals desiring to transition from nursing homes back into their communities – again, a significant cost savings to Kansas. CILS will be absolutely critical in carrying out this federal initiative. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation report found that 65% of individuals age 65 and older want to receive services in their homes. As Centers for Independent Living, we are committed to making this possible.

I am excited about the addition of Youth Transition Services at Three Rivers. We were very fortunate to hire a remarkable young adult who provides peer mentoring, advocacy and training to other young adults as they transition from special education into independent lives in their communities. A local Special Education teacher recently sent me a letter stating that she had been struggling to keep one of her students from dropping out. After participating in a K-State peer support event organized by our new Transition Specialists, the student stated “I didn't know people like me could really go to college!” This student is now preparing for college next fall. I have received numerous comments from community members, educators and businesses stating that they have waited years for the type of assistance Three Rivers can now provide. With full funding, Three Rivers and other Kansas CILS can insure the infrastructure exists so that Kansans with disabilities live independently.

Our total funding request includes \$116,000 which would attain each Kansas CIL base funding of \$250,000.

In addition, I would like to address the fiscal impact Three Rivers and other Kansas CILS experienced as a result of the recent Federal audit of SRS Vocational Rehabilitation Services. You may remember hearing about a similar situation that occurred last year with CDDOs and CMHCs where due to a federal audit, state general funds needed to be replaced. For the past 16 years Eight CILs in Kansas, including Three Rivers have provided a portion of their base funding dollars as the state match necessary to bring down the federal dollars, totaling \$143,000 SGF. As of July 31, and RSA's new interpretation of federal regulations regarding use of Title I Vocational Rehabilitation funds, this agreement is no longer in effect. The recent Federal audit resulted in an immediate cessation July 31, 2007 of this “sub-granting” of Federal funds. SRS has been able to find one year of interim funding and included the request in their enhancement package for fiscal year 2009. Therefore I am asking for you to restore the \$143,000 SGF to make up for the loss due to the federal audit.

In conclusion, our total request for base funding for Centers for Independent living is \$259,000 SGF, this amount was included in the SRS Enhancement Budget Request for FY 2009, but was not included in the Governor's Budget Recommendation. Centers for Independent Living are a cost effective strategy toward providing supports and services to individuals with disabilities and seniors in Kansas. We ask for your thoughtful consideration of our request, and I would be glad to stand for questions.