



Springfield Center for Independent Living

Article as it appears in the Illinois Times by Patrick Yeagle (March 10-16, 2016)

Pete Roberts, director of Springfield Center for Independent Living, says his agency will be lucky to survive the budget crisis.

“This is kind of a scary time,” he said. “I’ve been in this business for 40 years, and this is probably the worst year I’ve had in terms of stability and being able to provide services.”

SCIL helps people with disabilities live on their own instead of in more costly state run institutions. The services SCIL provides include job training, help finding affordable and accessible housing, technology assistance, personal advocacy when dealing with bureaucracy and more.

About \$22,000 of SCIL’s funding comes directly from the federal government, with state acting as a “pass-through” for the rest, but the state hasn’t been passing on the federal funding. Some of the agency’s programs are required to be funded by court order, which Roberts says has helped keep SCIL open.

“I think it’s inevitable that if they don’t pass a budget for fiscal year 2017, we’ll probably close,” Roberts said. “We can’t keep going. Even if they do pass a budget, I think we’ll be permanently hurt in terms of our ability to provide services.”

Roberts says SCIL has stayed open so far by institution furlough days, delaying new programs and not filling positions as workers leave for more stable employment. There’s no waiting list for services yet, but that’s likely to happen soon, Roberts says. He took a 40 –percent cut and sometimes fills in around the office by cleaning toilets or doing other entry-level task

“Our staff is overloaded,” he said. “We can’t get all of our work done.”

Roberts says social services groups have already tried pleading their case in the Statehouse, to no avail.

“I don’t know what It’s going to take,” he said. “I reasly don’t know.”