



Development Module

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The Independent Living Skills (ILS) Modules were designed to help regional and local districts easily set up an ILS program to help children who are Blind/Visually Impaired (BVI) to learn the skills necessary for managing daily life. ILS is one component of the nine categories of the expanded core curriculum (ECC) and includes cooking, cleaning, dressing, hygiene, home maintenance, laundry, organization, and more. These skills are essential for students' immediate use as well as use in the future as they go on to seek and maintain employment.

Brief History

In the early 2000s, consultants from the Michigan Department of Education – Low Incidence Outreach (MDE-LIO) created an Independent Living Skills Parent Partnership (ILSPP) program. The consultants partnered with skilled ILS instructors and a small number of school districts within Michigan to help families of children who are BVI improve daily living skills.

The program was designed to empower parents and children to practice adapted techniques in their home environments after they were taught the skills in a small group setting. School personnel who worked with the children also learned adaptive ILS and gained the confidence needed to provide this critical instruction to other families independent of MDE-LIO and the ILS trainers. Instructors and families met as a group once or twice a month for about two hours or more to work on techniques and skills, and the families were asked to practice the new skills at home.

Families with children ranging from toddlers to teenagers participated in the program. This created a networking environment for the parents as well as a mentoring atmosphere. At least one adult family member (parent, guardian, or grandparent) was required to attend each session of the program with their child.

ILS Program Feedback

"I really appreciate how the MDE staff individualized instruction during the workshops. All the students were working in the same skill area, but they were each working at their level, on skills that were age appropriate. The workshops helped parents gain confidence in their ability to teach and learn that there are many ways to complete a task."

-Rikilynn Layher, COMS, CVRT (August 2020)

Support for ILS Programs

Research supports the need for ILS training for children who are BVI. The traditional method of teaching ILS in a general education setting does not adequately prepare students with a visual impairment, thus creating a need for a program that focuses on adaptive skills, according to the Blind and Visually Impaired Students Educational Service Guidelines (Pugh and Erin, 1999).

Furthermore, in a 2002 study, children ages 6-9 with visual impairments performed ILS at a significantly different level than their sighted peers. Students with typical sight performed all but 14.5% of the tasks given, whereas children with visual impairments did not perform 41% of the tasks independently. (A Comparison of the Independent Living Skills of Primary Students with Visual Impairments and Their Sighted Peers: A Pilot Study, Lewis and Iselin, 2002.)

In a 2012 review of 15 different studies on employability, the authors shared that there is efficacy with implementing interventions for students in improving ILS. As a result of this research, and after expressed need for support in the area of ILS, a partnership with the local school districts and families was formed to address and meet the ILS needs of children with visual impairments with the intent to improve daily living skills and further employability. (A Systematic Review of Transition Interventions Affecting the Employability of Youths with Visual Impairments, Cavanaugh and Giesen, 2012.)

Creating the ILS Modules

In Michigan, the original ILSP program was well received. However, very few districts were able to receive training after the initial program due to a lack of trainers available to serve multiple districts at one time. By creating an easy-to-follow program with sample lessons, templates, checklists, and embedded trainings, more districts have the potential to fulfill the ILS training need for their students and families.

Using the Modules

The ILS Modules are designed to help BVI school personnel with the steps needed to develop a program like the ILSP. The program is intended to be provided at no cost to parents. Before starting a new program, school personnel should seek approval from their district supervisor to determine if there is funding for such a project. Districts may choose to seek scholarships or grants prior to starting; also check your local and state grant resources. A budget list is included in the Development Module to assist with seeking funding. Those accessing the budget list will need to adjust for items that can be donated, have already been acquired, and for the number of tools needed.

After district approval has been granted, the ILS Modules will help you with each step of planning, including:

- Initial emails to parents
- Kickoff meeting information
- Sample agendas
- Checklists
- Material lists
- Grocery lists
- Training resources, documents, and videos
- Homework pages

Parents and teaching staff can use the checklists to determine areas of need for each child or utilize other established checklists that cover ILS within the ECC. These checklists will help staff see the areas of greatest need among the children and then develop a plan for which skills they will focus on teaching the families. It will also help with grouping students and designing age-appropriate lessons.

Instructors are encouraged to develop their own agendas for each program; however, eight modules have been created with action plans, agendas, material lists, grocery lists, training tools, and homework pages to cover areas of need that are commonly seen within many children who are BVI. You may choose to use all or parts of these modules for your program. Blank templates are also provided in Module 9 to assist with creating your own sessions. Additional training tools, ideas, and resources are provided in the final module.

Steps for Creating an ILS Parent Partnership

1. Discuss the ILS Parent Partnership with a supervisor (3 months prior to start of program or more).
2. Establish if there is funding available (within 1-2 weeks of meeting with supervisor).
3. Seek additional funding through grants, scholarships, and donations, if needed.
4. Establish where the program will be held (within 1 week of funding being secured).
5. Make sure there is storage space for the materials (within 2-4 weeks of meeting with supervisor).
6. Begin acquiring materials (after storage is established).
7. Set a date for the Kickoff Meeting.
8. Email parents to introduce the program and invite them to the Kickoff Meeting (2 weeks prior to Kickoff Meeting or more, if possible).
9. Hold Kickoff Meeting with families; determine who will attend, program start date.
10. Send a follow-up email to families that sign up for the program. Include date, time, and location of training (day after Kickoff Meeting).
11. Meet with team and create program plan based on checklists (1-2 days after Kickoff Meeting).
12. Order additional materials and establish grocery list and where to order (by 1 week after Kickoff Meeting).
13. Send reminder email to families about the program location and time (2-3 days before first training session).
14. Day of event: Set up location with materials, get groceries, and meet with families for training.

Disclaimer

Please note that MDE-LIO does not endorse any specific item listed within the manual. Please also note that the safety of students and families participating in the program is of utmost importance; however, student and family safety is not the responsibility of MDE-LIO. Please use extreme caution when using devices such as stoves, ovens, microwaves, or items that have sharp blades or use electricity.

District Name:	Date:
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Goal

Build local capacity in the area of independent living skills (ILS) by providing instruction and training to children who are Blind or Visually Impaired and their families.

Objectives

1. Increase parent understanding and awareness of age-appropriate ILS.
2. Increase parent skills by providing direct and hands-on instruction on how to teach their child ILS.
3. Provide parents with resources that will further increase their ability to teach ILS within their home.

Activities

To be determined based on ILS assessment/checklist outcomes.

Begin Date:	End Date:
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Trainings will be provided:

- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Bi-weekly
- ☐ Monthly

Several materials are good to have on hand to make an independent living skills (ILS) program run smoothly. Some items may already be located in your school district, home, or within a local home economics classroom. Some items may need to be purchased or borrowed.

Kitchen:

- ☐ Black trays (from American Printing House for the Blind) or cafeteria trays – Federal Quota or borrow from school
- ☐ Silverware (forks, spoons, butter knives)
- ☐ Sharp knives
- ☐ Paring knives
- ☐ A set of plastic lettuce knives (serrated)
- ☐ Cutting boards, multiple colors and sizes (light and dark colors for contrast)
- ☐ Pots and pans
- ☐ Mugs
- ☐ Soup bowls
- ☐ Mixing bowls
- ☐ Small prep bowls
- ☐ Waffle iron or Foreman Grill
- ☐ Strainer
- ☐ Teapot
- ☐ Hand towels (10 or more)
- ☐ Electric skillet
- ☐ Spatulas
- ☐ Scrapers
- ☐ Paper plates or plastic plates
- ☐ Dish soap
- ☐ Microwaveable bowl
- ☐ Shaker
- ☐ Strainer
- ☐ Chopper
- ☐ Measuring cups
- ☐ Measuring spoons
- ☐ Microwave
- ☐ Oven/stove
- ☐ Refrigerator
- ☐ Toaster oven
- ☐ Can opener

Laundry:

- ☐ Laundry soap liquid
- ☐ Laundry soap pods
- ☐ Dryer sheets
- ☐ Liquid fabric softener
- ☐ Flip and fold
- ☐ Bath towels, hand towels, wash clothes
- ☐ Children's clothing (shirts, pants, socks, underwear)
- ☐ Adult clothing (long sleeve shirts, T-shirts, sweatshirts, pants, socks)
- ☐ Bump dots
- ☐ Hi-Marks
- ☐ Laundry baskets
- ☐ Hangers
- ☐ Iron
- ☐ Ironing board
- ☐ Divided laundry hamper

Organization:

- ☐ Sock locks
- ☐ Rubber bands
- ☐ Color Mates
- ☐ Identi-Buttons
- ☐ Aluminum or plastic braille
- ☐ Clothing identifiers
- ☐ Small containers
- ☐ Braille labeler or braille writer
- ☐ Index notecards
- ☐ Safety pins

Bedroom:

- ☐ Blankets
- ☐ Pillows
- ☐ Sheets
- ☐ Bed

Maintenance:

- ☐ Batteries
- ☐ Light bulbs
- ☐ Screwdriver
- ☐ Hammer
- ☐ Nails
- ☐ Screws
- ☐ Small boards
- ☐ Small lamp
- ☐ Extension cord
- ☐ Power strip
- ☐ Unused/clean toilet plunger

Cleaning:

- ☐ Vacuum
- ☐ Broom
- ☐ Dustpan
- ☐ Feather duster
- ☐ Dust cloth
- ☐ Mop
- ☐ Bucket
- ☐ Toilet brush

Disclaimer

Please note that MDE-LIO does not endorse any specific item, website, or store listed within the manual. Please also note that the safety of students and families participating in the program is not the responsibility of MDE-LIO.

Where to Purchase Items:

- [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com) (amazon.com)
- [The Home Depot](https://www.homedepot.com) (homedepot.com)
- [Lowes](https://www.lowes.com) (lowes.com)
- [Independent Living Aids](https://www.independentliving.com) (independentliving.com)
- [Maxi Aids](https://www.maxiaids.com) (maxiaids.com)
- [Pampered Chef](https://www.pamperedchef.com) (pamperedchef.com)
- Dollar store
- Local grocery store (e.g., Meijer, Walmart)
- Local hardware store
- Resale shop

Materials

Several materials are good to have on hand to make an independent living skills (ILS) program run smoothly. Some items may already be located in your school district, home, or within a local home economics classroom. Some items may need to be purchased or borrowed. Some items may be available via Federal Quota (FQ) funds. Here is a basic budget to get you started. You will need to make adjustments based on the number of students you serve, what you already have available, and what has been donated. The cost listed is per item and is an estimate. You may need 10 trays for the project, so take that into account when requesting funding. Items such as microwaves, beds, and ovens were not listed. It will be important to look for a site that has these items in place. Plan an additional cost per session for food. For a program with 10-12 students and their parents, plan an additional \$75-100 per session to account for food and materials.

Item to Purchase	Cost Per Item
Black APH trays or cafeteria trays (FQ)	\$26
Set of silverware (Service for 12) (forks, spoons, butter knives)	\$50
Plates	\$5
Sharp knives	\$12
Paring knives	\$8
Plastic lettuce knives (serrated)	\$7
Cutting board	\$10
Can Opener	\$12
Pots, pans, and strainer set	\$50
Mugs (4)	\$12
Soup bowls	\$20
Mixing bowls, prep bowls, and measuring cup/spoon set	\$20
Foreman Grill	\$29
Chopper (Pampered Chef)	\$40

Item to Purchase	Cost Per Item
3-quart Micro-Cooker Plus (microwaveable bowl with strainer lid by Pampered Chef)	\$29
Teapot	\$12
Dish towels (10 or more)	\$16
Electric skillet	\$35
Spatula	\$3
Double spatula (Maxi-Aids)	\$14
Plastic plates (50)	\$5
Dish soap	\$3.50
Laundry soap liquid	\$15
Laundry soap pods	\$9
Dryer sheets	\$3.50
Liquid fabric softener	\$7
Flip and Fold (Maxi-Aids)	\$10
Bump dots	\$9
Hi-Marks (Maxi-Aids)	\$3.95
Laundry baskets	\$12
Hangers	\$2
Iron	\$10
Ironing board	\$8
Divided laundry hamper	\$38
Sock locks (Maxi-Aids)	\$3.95

Item to Purchase	Cost Per Item
Color Mates (Maxi Aids)	\$48
Rubber bands	\$2.50
Identi-Buttons Clothing Identifiers (Maxi-Aids)	\$4
Index notecards	\$1
Safety pins	\$5
Sheets	\$12
Duracell 9V batteries (4 pack)	\$14
Say When Liquid Level Indicator (Maxi-Aids) (need Duracell batteries)	\$16
Extension cord with power strip	\$9
Unused/clean toilet plunger	\$10
Magnetic screwdriver kit	\$16
Hammer	\$5
Nails	\$5
Screws and nuts	\$5
Broom and dust pan	\$10
Toilet brush with caddy	\$6
Bucket	\$5
Feather duster	\$10
Mop (Swiffer Wet Jet)	\$23
Total	\$721

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