

# Preparing Students and Families for Accessing Postsecondary Supports & Services

Illinois Center for Transition to Work  
Symposium



# Agenda

- Introduction to SWTCIE
- Dignity in Pay
- Preparing Students/Families for Accessing Postsecondary Supports and Services
  - Student Involvement
  - Family Engagement
  - Interagency Collaboration
  - Questions?
  - Follow us!
  - Contact Information



# SWTCIE Illinois Grant

## PURPOSE:

- Increase the opportunity for adults, students, and youth with disabilities who are currently earning or contemplating subminimum wage work to obtain competitive integrated employment (CIE).
- Assist 14(c) certificate holders in business model transformation

## PARTNERS:

- **Project Implementation and Evaluation:** University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- **Training and Technical Assistance:** Virginia Commonwealth University
- **14(c) Certificate Holders:** AID, Centerstone, CTF Illinois, Human Support Services, Kreider Services, and The Workshop
- **Division of Rehabilitation Services:** Grant awardee





# Funding Source

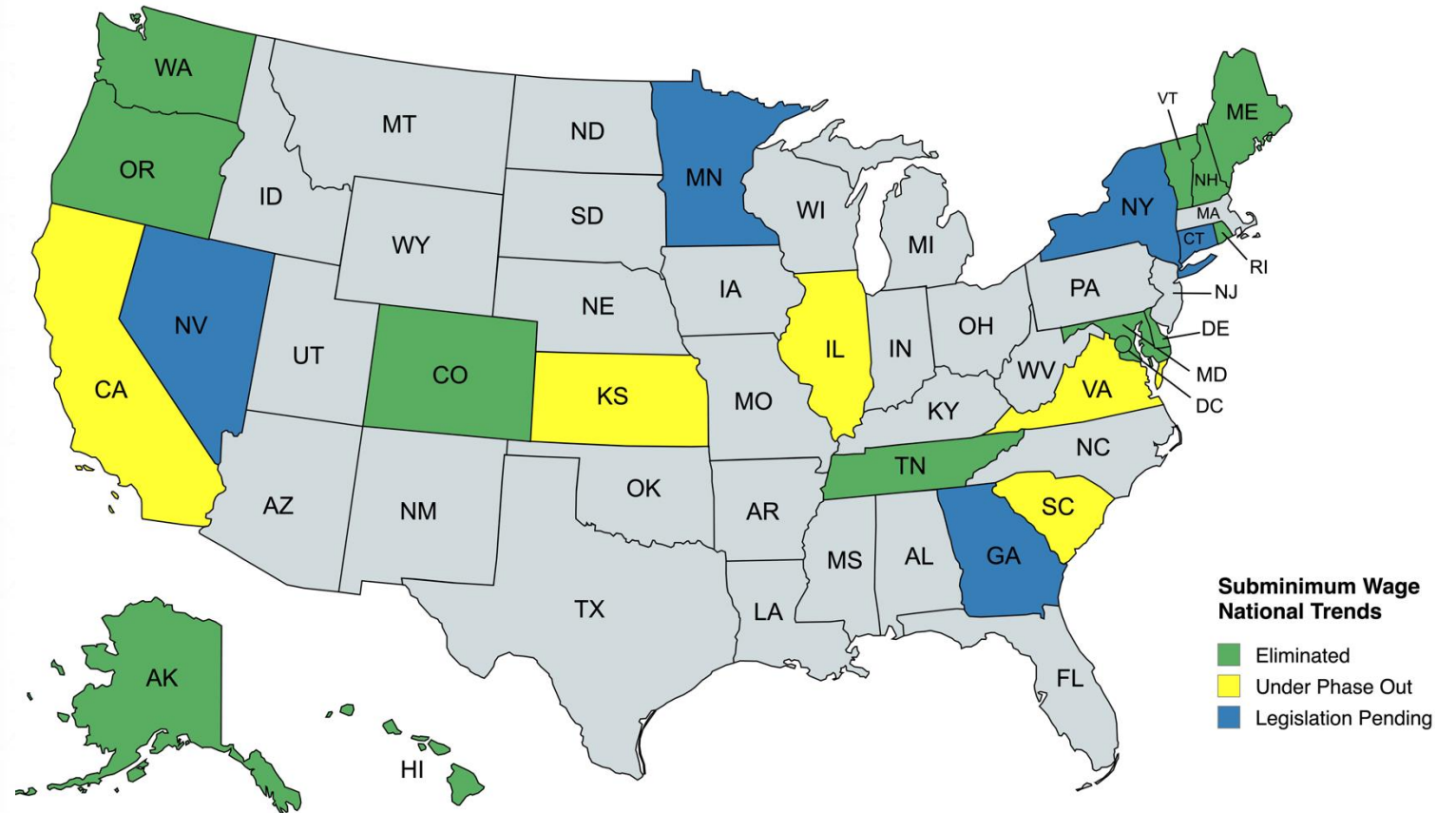


## 84.421 Disability Innovation Fund (DIF)

- Funded by U.S. Department of Education – Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)
- The purpose is to **support innovative activities aimed at increasing CIE** for youth and other individuals with disabilities seeking or engaged in SMW employment.
- Illinois DRS was one of 13 states chosen for this award and received \$14,193,946.00 for the period of 10/1/22 – 9/30/27, the second highest dollar amount.

# Subminimum Wage Trends Nationwide

23 states have eliminated, phased out, or have legislation pending to do away with subminimum wage.



# Dignity in Pay

HB0793ham004

- **Signed into law on January 21, 2025**
- Requires **responsible and gradual** five-year phase out
- **Eliminates** on January 1, 2030, the use of active or pending 14(c) certificates
- **Prohibits** paying **subminimum wages** to employees with a disability
- **WILL NOT** close day programs or sheltered work, but does mandate at least minimum wage payment for work
- Addresses **fair pay** as both a civil rights and economic issue
- Prioritizes **Person-Centered planning**, especially for aging adults
- Increases **personal needs allowances**







# **Preparing Students and Families for Postsecondary Supports & Services**

ICTW Symposium

# Student Involvement



**Self-Determination  
Instruction**



**Transition  
Portfolios**



**Email Accounts**



# Self-Determination

Self-Determination is commonly defined as having the capacity to steer one's life in ways and directions to contribute to a meaningful life.

(Carter & Unruh, 2012)



# Self-Determination Pillars

- 1. Self-Advocacy:** Knowing yourself and your rights and having the ability and confidence to speak about your strengths, preferences, interests, and areas of need.
- 2. Self-Management:** Monitoring and assessing your behavior.
- 3. Choice & Decision-Making:** Choice making is showing a preference between two or more options. Decision-making is considering all potential solutions to situation, understanding the consequences of each solution, and choosing the best solution.
- 4. Problem Solving:** The process of identifying a solution that solves a problem.



# Self-Advocacy: Knowledge of Self

- Understanding your preferences, interests, strengths, and needs.
  - **Activities can include:**
    - Completing questionnaires to identify personality/learning strengths and preferences
    - Setting up stations to practice different learning styles
    - Exploring careers/career fields that align with your personal preferences and strengths
    - Student-led IEPs
    - Identifying supports needed to be successful





# Self-Advocacy: Knowledge of Rights

- Entitlement (IDEA) vs. Eligibility (ADA)
  - **Activities can include:**
    - Learning about the protections IDEA allows for versus ADA
      - Review IEPs! Identify what's an accommodation vs. a modification and discuss how modifications do **NOT** exist in college or the post-secondary world.
    - Attend conferences offered by advocacy agencies
    - Create mock interviews with disability service offices
      - Practice requesting reasonable accommodations
    - Invite advocacy agencies in to speak to students about their rights



# Self-Advocacy: Communication

- Learning about how to communicate with various persons (peers, supervisors, community members)
  - **Activities can include:**
    - Role-playing situations where students must advocate for themselves
    - Practicing conflict-resolution skills
    - Having students talk to their general education teachers about their accommodations
    - Engage in community-based instruction (CBI) activities that allow for authentic communication opportunities



# Self-Advocacy: Leadership

- Leadership can promote student's self-advocacy skills and serve as a model for other students
  - **Activities can include:**
    - Allowing students to lead their IEP meeting
    - Allowing students to determine class schedules
    - Giving students leadership roles in the classroom
    - Encouraging involvement in extracurricular activities
    - Pairing students with mentors (older students or adults)
      - Allowing students to be mentors themselves to elementary-aged students





# Why is self-advocacy important in the postsecondary world?

- Self-Advocacy instruction has been associated with positive post-school outcomes for persons with disabilities including:
  - Enhanced employment ([Fornes, Rocco, & Rosenberg, 2008](#); [CitationWehmeyer & Palmer, 2003](#))
  - Improved health and wellbeing ([Johnson & Krueger, 2005](#))
  - Enhanced quality of life ([Lachapelle et al., 2005](#); [CitationNota, Ferrari, Soresi, & Wehmeyer, 2007](#))
  - Greater independence ([Schalock, Verdugo, Jenaro, Wang, Wehmeyer, Xu et al., 2005](#))
- Moreover, unless the family has guardianship, adult agencies will typically communicate with the client



# Transition Portfolios

Transition portfolios house important documents and information that students will need after high school.



# What to include in a transition portfolio?

- Personal information
- Employment documents
- Medical information
- Transition assessments





# Personal Information

- Most recent Individualized Education Plan
- Summary of Performance
- Related Service Provider Reports
  - Speech, OT/PT, social work, etc.
- Most recent psychological evaluation
  - Please note, many agencies prefer to have a full-scale IQ listed
  - Additionally, agencies prefer assessments versus a file review
- One-pagers (All About Me)



# Employment Documents

- Resume
- Cover letter
- Letters of recommendation/references
- Contacts for former employers
- Accommodations that have been useful in past work experiences

Ensure that students have access to their Social Security Card/Work Authorization Card and a valid Driver's License or State ID





# Medical Information

- Doctors' names, specialties, locations
- Doctors' reports (if applicable)
- Medicines and dosages (if applicable)

Remember, HIPPA comes into effect when a student turns 18!





# Transition Portfolios

## ONLINE VERSIONS

- The benefit to an online version is that students can access this information after they graduate.
  - Google Drive Folder
  - T-Folio

## PHYSICAL VERSIONS

- The benefit of a physical version is that students will have hard copies of documents. However, they may be easily lost.
  - Binder
    - Tabs for different sections
  - Thumb drive

# Why are transition portfolios important?

- Most adult services agencies need paperwork supporting the need for services.
- Ensuring students have access to the paperwork will prevent delays in accessing services.
  - For students further removed from school, most schools retain records for only 7 years after graduation.
- A centralized way to house all this information.



# Email Accounts

Email accounts allow students to save important documentation and contacts.





# Email Accounts

- Many school email accounts are no longer accessible after graduation.
- Utilize a free options like Gmail or Yahoo.
- Reiterate the importance of professional email addresses.
- Assist students with saving important contacts in their email (e.g., previous employers, teachers, etc.).
- Instruct students on how to utilize email, correspondence, etc.



## Share Out!



How have you promoted student involvement in your classroom or within your school?

# Family Engagement



**IEP Participation**



**Regular  
Communication**



**Family  
Information  
Nights**



# IEP Participation

Each public agency must take steps to ensure that one or both of the parents of a child with a disability are present at each IEP Team meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate, including

- (1) Notifying parents of the meeting early enough to ensure that they will have an opportunity to attend; and
- (2) Scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed on time and place.

(IDEA Section 300.322 Parent participation)



# Strategies for Increasing Familial Involvement in IEP Meetings

- Kohler's Taxonomy for Transition Planning identifies Family Involvement as major component of transition planning, that can be further broken down into:
  - Family Involvement
    - Involvement in student assessment; participation in evaluation of the student's program; families exercise decision making; family attendance at IEP meetings; family role in natural support network
- Family Empowerment
  - Pre-IEP planning activities for families; families presented with choices; structured methods to identify family needs; information provided to families in appropriate language
- Family Training
  - Training on promoting student self-determination, advocacy, transition-related planning processes, agencies/services, and legal issues

(Cavendish et al., 2016)



# Strategies for Increasing Familial Involvement in IEP Meetings

- Create or encourage your families to join support groups for families of children with disabilities. (Wagner et al., 2012)
- Reiterate the importance of families supporting their child's education at home. (Wagner et al., 2012)
  - Higher expectations for your child lead to better outcomes.
- Frequent communication is key. (Cavendish et al., 2016)
- Utilize technology. (Cavendish et al., 2016)
- Put the student at the center of the IEP meeting and allow them to take the lead. (Cavendish et al., 2016)
- Include family input in the IEP and work with them to develop IEP goals and objectives (Cavendish et al., 2016)



# Regular Communication

Communicate regularly with families, by their preferred means of communication.

## Ideas for communication:

- Utilizing apps like Remind, Class Dojo, etc.
  - Many families prefer less rich communication like texts or emails  
(Thompson, Mazer, & Grady, 2015)
- Monthly newsletters
- Weekly email announcements



# Family Information Nights

Host family information nights at the school to inform families about different transition topics like:

- IDEA vs. ADA
  - Entitlement vs. Eligibility
- Accommodations after high school
- Requesting and advocating for postsecondary supports
- Fostering self-determination in the home



# Suggestions for Family Information Nights

- Host family workshops that are driven by families, to discuss various topics that are important to them (e.g., self-determination, IDEA vs. ADA).
  - Encourage a family member to take the lead, so it is driven by family perspectives
- Invite adult agencies in to speak about their supports and the process to get connected with them (e.g., Community Rehabilitation Partners, Centers for Independent Living, DRS).
- Food and drink are always appreciated and may entice people to come!
- Offer childcare, if possible, for younger siblings.
- You can piggyback off other school events.



## Share Out!



How have you promoted family engagement in your classroom or within your school?

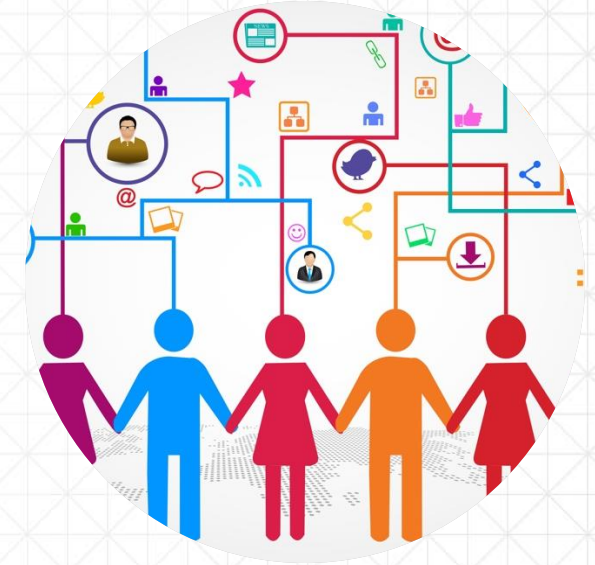
# Interagency Collaboration



## Key Players



## Transition Planning Committees



## Agency Linkages



# Key Players

Consider people who will be able to provide services but also think about the student's "village." Consider people like:

- Family members
- Neighbors or other close adult relationships
- Faith community members
- Friends

Be sure to ask the student and the family who are their key players!





# Why are key players important?

- Once students graduate, they may no longer have access to their school staff who were a part of their IEP team.
- Involving individuals who will be a part of the student's life after high school is important.
- To promote collaborative involvement, consider using person-centered planning (PCP):
  - Person-centered planning is a method of sharing information about an individual to develop a profile and set future goals, while involving the person with a disability,

their IEP team, family members, friends, and anyone else who can support the individual beyond school (Bambara & Kern, 2005).

The goals of a PCP are:

- Involvement in the community
- Developing and maintaining relationships with peers
- Increasing self-determination by expressing preferences and choices
- Providing opportunities to contribute in society with dignity
- Continuing to acquire skills (Kincaid, 1996)

# Person Centered Planning



**Bonnie Jean Smith**  
Member, MNGCDD

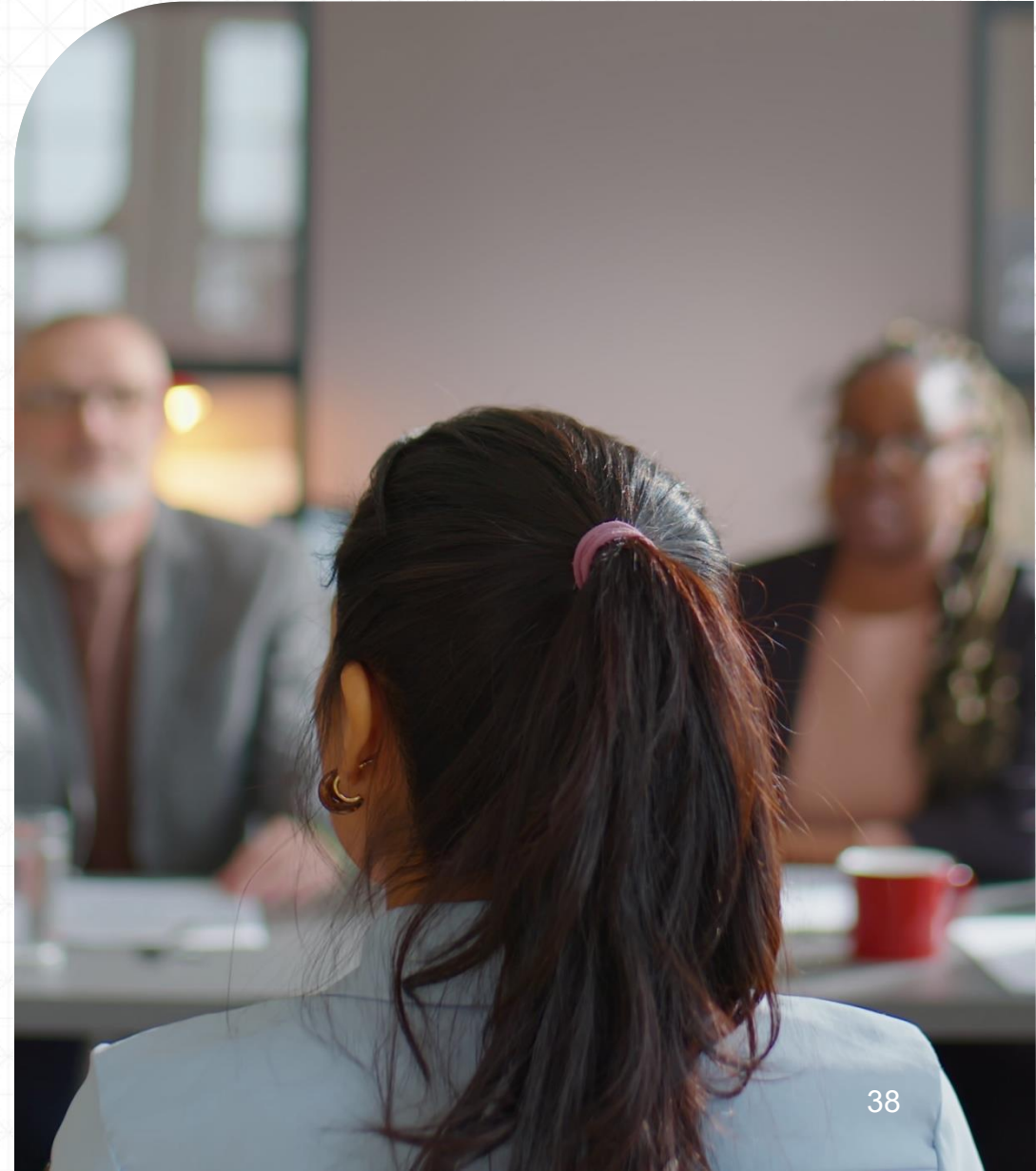


# Transition Planning Committees

Required by DRS, local Transition Planning Committees shall meet quarterly and consist of a variety of members including:

- Special, general, and vocational education teachers
- Families of youth with disabilities
- Persons with disabilities
- Local businesses
- DRS staff
- Adult service providers

(ICTW School to Work Transition Guide, 2023)





# What is the purpose of a transition planning committee?

1. Identifying transition services, programs, and funding sources provided within the community for secondary and postsecondary aged youth with disabilities and their families as well as the development of strategies to address unmet needs;
2. Facilitating the development of transition interagency teams to address present and future transition needs of individual students on their individual education plans;
3. Develop a mission statement that emphasizes the goals of integration and participation in all aspects of community life for persons with disabilities;

(ICTW School-to-Work Transition Guide, 2023)

# What is the purpose of a transition planning committee? (continued)

4. Providing for the exchange of information such as appropriate data, effectiveness studies, special projects, exemplary programs and creating funding of programs;
5. Developing consumer in-service and awareness training programs for the local community; and
6. Assisting in staff training for individual transition planning and student transition needs assessment.

(ICTW School-to-Work Transition Guide, 2023)

# Agency Linkages

It's always appropriate!

If appropriate, there is evidence that a representative of any participating agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition services was invited to the IEP team meeting with the prior consent of the parent or student who has reached the age of majority.

## IDEA 34 CFR 300.321(b)(3)





# Why are agency linkages important?

- When rehabilitation professionals and youth connect before graduation/high school completion, they encounter fewer obstacles. (Agran et al., 2002)
- Collaborative partnerships built before a student graduates have proven to be beneficial for both students and their families. (Gowdy, Carlson, & Rapp, 2003)
- Youth who have support and services available to them after graduation have better transition outcomes. (Benz, Lindsfrom, & Yovanoff, 2000)
- Invite DRS counselors and adult agencies to IEP meetings! If they cannot make it, connect the family with the agency and include informational literature in their native language.
  - As much as possible, give a reasonable amount of notice to the adult agency staff
    - Offer online options, if possible

## Share Out!



How have you promoted interagency collaboration in your classroom or within your school?

# Questions?



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# Contact Us

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