



TRANSPORTATION SOLUTIONS

Strategies for Getting to Work-based Learning Sites

Acknowledgements

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Contributors

ICTW Staff

Stacy Dymond, *Director*
Melanie Phelan, *Training Specialist*
Jessica Sipovic, *Training Specialist*
Nicole Birri, *Training Specialist*
Jane Collins, *Training Specialist*
Jim Mayer, *Training Specialist*
Heidy Barcus, *Graphic Design and Web Specialist*

Regional Board Members

Region 1A (Northeastern Illinois)

Patrick Abraham, *District Transition Services Coordinator, Township High School District 211*
Claire Getzoff, *Special Education Teacher, Evanston Township High School*
Melissa Hammer, *Transition Specialist, Riverside-Brookfield District #208*
Richard Jones, *Rehabilitation Counselor, Division of Rehabilitation Services*
Aby Karottu, *Special Education Teacher, Niles Township High School District 219*
Samantha Rosell, *Transition Specialist, Thornton Fractional District 215*
Malisha Webber, *Rehabilitation Services Supervisor, Division of Rehabilitation Services*

Region 1B (Northeastern Illinois)

Betty Augustine, *Vocational Coordinator, Oswego Community Unit School District 308*
Michelle Bank, *Transition Coordinator, D120 Transition Center – Mundelein High School*
Taryn Chrapkowski, *Transition Specialist, Hinsdale District 86*
Katie Ellsworth, *Autism Specialist, Easterseals Serving Chicagoland and Greater Rockford*
Dede Gill, *Assistant Superintendent for Special Services, Huntley Community School District 158*
Pam Schweitzer, *Pre-Vocational Coordinator/DRS STEP Coordinator, PASEC*
Denise Zartmann, *Special Education Transition Teacher, Aurora East D131*

Region 2 (Northwestern Illinois)

Kim Johnson, *Special Education Program Coordinator, Henry-Stark SPED District 801*
Lori Kitner, *Assistant Bureau Chief of Region 2, Division of Rehabilitation Services*
Jeff Kulpa, *Transition Teacher, Lighted Way Children's Development Center*
Katie Morford, *Transition Specialist, Black Hawk SPED District*
Mallory Ploch, *Executive Director of Special Education, BMP Tri-County SPED Co-op*
Kim Ramsby, *Special Education Supervisor, Belvidere District 100*
Jessica Strouss, *Life Skills & Transition Teacher, Hall High School District #502*
Ravi Wilson, *STEP Coordinator, Freeport School District 145*

Region 3 (West Central Illinois)

Meghan Brake, *Youth Services Coordinator, Tazewell-Mason Counties SPED Association*
Jill Bruington, *CTE Principal, Illinois School for the Deaf*
Tristin Duffy, *Special Education Teacher, Ball Chatham School District 201*
Natashia Myers, *Rehabilitation Services Supervisor, Division of Rehabilitation Services*
Jennifer Shaw, *Director of Special Education, Rochester CUSD 3A*

Region 4 (East Central Illinois)

Lisa Allen, *Life Skills Teacher/Coordinator, Paxton-Buckley-Loda High School*
Mike Bryant, *DRS Counselor and STEP Specialist, Division of Rehabilitation Services*
Dawn Duff, *Vocational Coordinator, Bloomington District 87*
Alex Goudy, *Special Education Administrator/STEP Coordinator, Vermilion Area Special Education*
Kim Harden, *Transition Specialist, Eastern Illinois Area Special Education*
Dawn Sheppelman, *Vocational Coordinator, Normal Unit 5 Schools*
Penny Sylvester, *Vocational/Transition Coordinator, Kankakee High School District 111*

Region 5/6 (Southern Illinois)

Stacy Becker-Dwyer, *Special Education Teacher, O'Fallon Township High School*
Abby Clark, *Special Education Coordinator, Kaskaskia Special Education Cooperative*
Kimberly Fanning, *Youth Services Coordinator, Tri-County Special Education*
Ashley Holmes, *Rehabilitation Services Supervisor, Division of Rehabilitation Services*
Becky Jones, *STEP Coordinator, Franklin Jefferson Special Education District #801*
Denise Jones, *Youth Services Director, Tri-County Special Education (Jackson, Perry, Union)*

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Introduction

Work experiences, whether paid or unpaid, enable students with disabilities to learn job skills in the real world and clarify their career path. In fact, students with disabilities who participate in employment or work experiences are more likely to obtain successful postschool employment (Mazotti et al., 2021). Despite the benefits of work experiences, many educational programs struggle to provide work experiences in the community due to issues surrounding transportation. Common transportation challenges center on:

- availability of transportation
- staffing to support student transportation
- working transportation around students' schedules
- finding transportation routes that go to desired work experience sites
- the cost of transportation
- locating accessible transportation
- the length of travel time to work experience sites

In response to these challenges, the ICTW developed a questionnaire to obtain information from transition personnel in Illinois about effective strategies they use to address transportation challenges. Members of the ICTW Regional Boards provided input on the content of the questionnaire and methods for statewide distribution. The anonymous, online questionnaire was disseminated to all individuals on the ICTW listserv. Additionally, ICTW staff and Regional Board members shared the questionnaire with their professional contacts via email. The contents of this document are a synthesis of responses to two open-ended questions:

- What is the most creative strategy you have found for transporting students to work experience sites in the community? Tell us about it!
- What strategies have you found successful for funding transportation to work experience sites in the community?

A total of 364 transition personnel completed the questionnaire. Most respondents worked in communities with 2,500-49,000 people (55%) with fewer working in communities with 50,000 or more people (29%) or less than 2,500 people (16%). The percentage of respondents from each region of the state is listed below.

Region 1 (Northeastern Illinois)	53.5%
Region 2 (Northwestern Illinois)	9.3%
Region 3 (West Central Illinois)	8.2%
Region 4 (East Central Illinois)	17.0%
Regions 5 & 6 (Southern Illinois)	11.8%

We invite readers to explore the strategies in this resource and evaluate each strategy's potential for addressing transportation challenges in their community.

Tips for Selecting Strategies

The purpose of this resource is to share creative strategies transition personnel in Illinois have found effective for transporting students with disabilities to work experience sites in the community. These strategies may or may not be appropriate in your situation. Consider the following tips as you peruse the strategies presented in this resource.

1

One Size Does Not Fit All

As you sift through this resource, keep in mind that the strategies provided by other transition personnel worked in their unique situation. You might find the need to combine components from various strategies to come up with a solution that works for your specific needs.

2

Don't Go It Alone

Finding creative solutions is hard to do on your own. Identify possible collaborators and partners to help you work towards a transportation solution. This might include individuals from your school or district, families, community members, or agency staff.

3

Do Your Research

You might encounter names of specific programs or initiatives in this resource that are new to you. By doing a little investigation you might be surprised to find opportunities available in your area provided by senior citizen services, faith-based initiatives, taxi/ride-share providers, mass transit systems, or your local municipality, to name a few. Consider using community resource mapping to identify what is available near you.

4

Cross the T's and Dot the I's

Consult with your school/district leadership to ensure any strategies you are considering are in alignment with applicable policies, regulations, and procedures.

5

Be Patient but Persistent

Adoption of new strategies often takes time. Meanwhile, students still need to obtain work experiences. The last section of this resource provides ideas for continuing to provide work experiences in the absence of transportation services.

Consider an Array of Transportation Sources

The range of transportation sources varies from community to community making it important to explore all options available. Listed below are a variety of transportation sources to consider when trying to ensure students have transportation to engage in work experiences.

School Options

- School bus
- School vans/SUVs/cars
- Athletic bus
- School or district activity bus
- Driver's education vehicles
- School staff member's personal vehicle

Public Transportation

- Public bus
- Paratransit/Transit for seniors
- Train
- Shuttle buses

Private Transportation

- Taxi/limousine
- Rideshare services (e.g. Lyft, Uber)
- Uber ACCESS
- Private bus company

Township Transportation

- Senior transportation services
- Faith based non-profit organizations

Ride Sharing & Carpooling

- Students find their own ride
- Friend transports student
- Family transports student
- Carpool with other employees where the student works

Student Transports Self

- Walking
- Bicycling
- Driving
- Motorized scooter

Utilize a Variety of People to Provide Transportation

Identifying individuals who can help with providing transportation can be a challenge. Below is a list of people to consider when looking for transportation providers.

School staff

- Teachers
- Job coaches
- Paraprofessionals
- Other support staff
- Secretaries
- Administrators

Other individuals

- Students enrolled in Driver's Education classes
- Co-workers from the work experience site
- Adult agency staff
- Case managers (e.g., Department of Human Services)
- Parents/guardians
- Students (i.e., self-transportation)



Incentivize School Employees to Transport Students

When faced with a shortage of the number of drivers, districts across the state of Illinois have implemented strategies to increase drivers on staff. Listed below are incentives to consider when looking to build the certified driver pool in your school or district.

Encourage staff to obtain a non-Commercial Driver's License (non-CDL).

Require a non-CDL within the first 60 days of being hired.

Pay for staff to obtain a non-CDL.

Provide a stipend to staff that provide transportation.

Increase bus driver pay.

Partner with Families

It is essential that families are active participants in the transition planning process as students prepare for adult life. There are many ways that families can be involved in obtaining and providing transportation to and from work-based learning opportunities. Some ways schools are partnering with families are listed below.

Support Families to Obtain Low Cost Transportation

- Share information about discounted public transportation options available for people with disabilities (e.g., paratransit/senior transit services).
- Support families and students to apply for reduced bus fare cards and taxi coupons.

Encourage Families to Provide Transportation

- Ask parents if they are willing and able to transport their child.
- Reimburse mileage for families that provide transportation to work experience sites.

Assist Families to Arrange Transportation

- Encourage families to form carpools with other families.
- Suggest families enlist friends as transportation partners.
- Offer to set up a group message board for parents to coordinate rides to the job site.

Empower Families to Assume Increasing Responsibility for Transportation

- Explain the barriers to transportation early on so families can consider options.
- Require families and students to arrange and pay for transportation if the job is paid or takes place after school hours.

Identify New Funding Sources

Money does not grow on trees, but sometimes it can be found in places we did not consider looking. Funding sources can come from within the district, government programs, and other creative sources. Consider some of the options listed in this section if you are seeking more or new funding sources for transportation.



School Sources

- School District or Co-op
- Parent Teacher Organization
- Booster Club
- School-based Micro Businesses



Government Sources

- Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP)
- Regional Development funds
- Local Developmental Disabilities Board
- Property tax levy
- Local government initiative/local township programs



Other Sources

- Donations
- Fundraising
- Grant funding (e.g., local foundations, agencies)

Use Transportation Funding Creatively

Transportation funding can be used for more than a school bus. Consider the creative ways to use funding listed in this section as potential solutions to your transportation obstacles.

Pre-paid Vouchers and Gift Cards

- Bus passes
- Train tickets
- Taxi vouchers
- Rideshare gift cards (e.g., Uber, Lyft)

Vehicles

- Bicycle (for a student to get to work experiences)
- Bus/van for the work experience program
- Wheelchair accessible transportation
- Vehicle for school personnel to transport students to work experience sites (e.g., van, SUV, car)

Transportation Maintenance and Operating Costs

- Cost of operating a school bus, van, or car
- Cost to repair a car for student use

Mileage Reimbursement

- Mileage reimbursement for job coaches
- Parent reimbursement for transporting their student to work experiences

Maximize Limited Transportation Funds

When funding for transportation is limited, school teams have to be extra creative to stretch funds as far as possible. This section details how some schools have maximized their funding.

Determine if transportation providers offer discounted rates for people with disabilities and/or students.

Ask if transportation fees can be waived for staff who accompany students that require support to use transportation safely.

Negotiate a lower rate with private transportation companies for regularly scheduled transportation (e.g., taxi, limos, busses, rideshare services).

Collect transportation passes/vouchers/gift cards that have expired and ask that they be reissued if there is still money left on the cards.

Have students sign a job contract before they begin their internships that requires them to notify staff by a specific time if they are going to be absent and miss their internship. Cancelling transportation early may eliminate charges for unneeded transportation.

Selectively Choose Work Experience Sites

When seeking opportunities for work experiences, it is important that transportation to and from the site is carefully considered. Working through transportation options while establishing a partnership with a business is essential to ensure the success of the opportunity. Listed in this section are strategies to be intentional and selective when securing work experience sites.

- Select work experience sites that are within walking distance from school or on a public transportation route.
- Confirm transportation availability prior to securing a work experience.
- Make business partners aware of transportation issues prior to accepting paid or unpaid work experiences.
- Pass on a potential work experience when it does not fit the student's schedule.
- Secure work experience sites that are near each other.
- Identify work experience sites that can serve multiple students at the same location.



Adjust Student and Staff Schedules

Building schedules around transportation can be difficult, especially when transportation is already limited. Below are a list of options to consider when creating or adjusting staff and student schedules.

Consider using block scheduling or stacking related courses back-to-back to enable longer work experiences in the community.

Build time into the schedule for travel to work experience sites.

Work with administration when creating schedules/courses.

Change the time when students are out in the community to align with the availability of transportation.

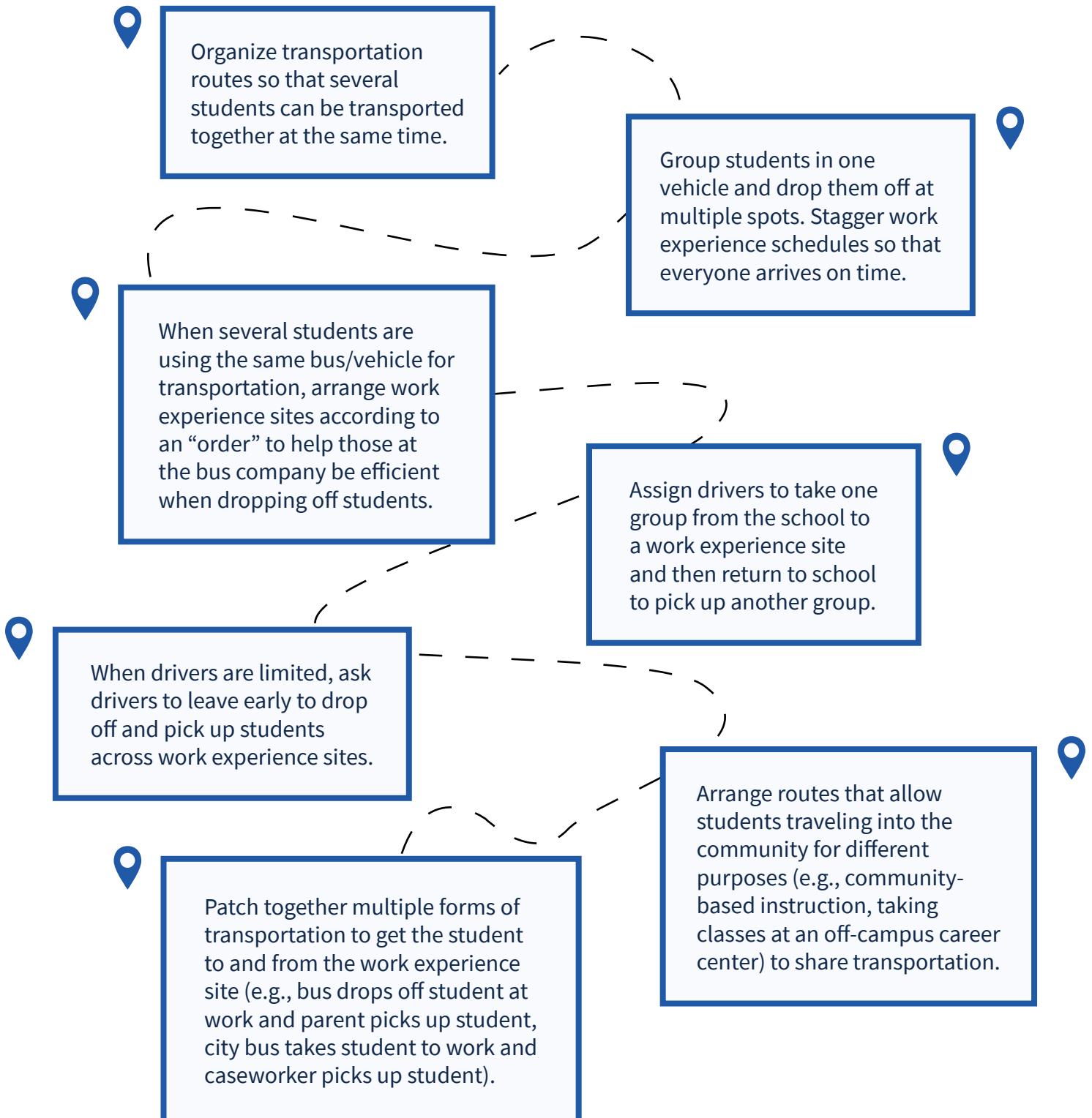
Re-structure student/job coach pairings to support off campus work experiences given the number of staff available and the ratio of drivers to students.

Juggle staff roles and schedules as needed each day to ensure students get to work experience sites.

Alter the student's school schedule (e.g., student leaves school early).

Rearrange Transportation Routes

When there are driver or bus shortages at your school, consider the following options for rearranging transportation routes.



Teach Students Transportation Skills

It is crucial to prepare students to navigate within their community. Having transportation skills may increase the transportation options available for a student to access safely. This section provides ideas for incorporating transportation training into students' daily routines.

- Train students to use the public transit system.
- Provide students with pedestrian safety skills instruction (e.g., how to determine walking routes, cross busy intersections, identify and understand community signs, safely navigate parking lots).
- Explore drivers' education with appropriate accommodations and/or accessible vehicles for students interested in driving.
- Instruct students in self-advocacy skills (e.g., using scripts for calling to schedule a taxi or paratransit ride, advocating for oneself in the community, identifying community-based supports).
- Assess each student's needs for instruction and/or supports related to transportation and incorporate them in the student's transition plan and annual goals.
- Identify opportunities to provide community-based instruction (CBI) by utilizing a range of transportation options to travel to community sites.



Advocate for Transportation Needs

Advocating for significant changes in transportation requires amplifying your voice and connecting with influential individuals. Below are ideas to explore various pathways for advocating change in transportation options.

1 Make district administrators, the school transportation department, and school board aware of the transition program and transportation needs.

2 Work with the public transit system to establish fixed routes to a specific school building during the day to provide extra transportation support.

3 Submit letters from students to the local city council or various townships to increase public bus stops within the community.

4 Submit requests/complaints to your local public transit authority.

5 Contact the mayor's office to address transportation issues for people with disabilities.

6 Reach out to local elected officials and board members to adopt a ride-share program for seniors and people with disabilities.

7 Write your Illinois Senator and Representative to lobby for better transportation options for adults with disabilities in your region.

8 Provide feedback about transportation issues to local officials through surveys, emails, letters, and social media.

9 Encourage public transit authorities to provide more route options.

10 Advocate for program needs by providing potential solutions.

What To Do in the Meantime When Transportation is Not Available

Changes do not happen overnight, so consider these ideas when you need to provide work experiences and do not have reliable transportation options.

- Provide work experiences in the school building or on school grounds.
- Develop an in-school business (e.g., selling donuts and coffee, open a resale store)
- Find school-based/on-campus employment.
- Bring jobs from the community into the school building.
- Involve students in work experiences provided by the school's career center.
- Provide a virtual job experience.

