

**The Status of Transition Services
for
Secondary Students with Disabilities in Illinois**

**Interagency Coordinating Council
2003 Annual Report to the
Governor and General Assembly of Illinois**

Submitted by

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State Superintendent of Schools
Illinois State Board of Education**

**Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services**

November 2004

Dear Governor Blagojevich and Members of the General Assembly:

We are pleased to share the Interagency Coordinating Council's 2003 Annual Report on *The Status of Transition Services for Secondary Students with Disabilities in Illinois*. This report reflects a year of progress following the Council's renewed commitment in 2002 to work collaboratively to strengthen the transition service delivery system and improve outcomes for Illinois youth with disabilities. As part of this commitment, the Interagency Coordinating Council has begun work on a comprehensive work plan based on the Council's mandated functions that addresses a number of systemic challenges identified by the Council.

This report provides a wealth of information about transition services in Illinois, including: systemic challenges; an overview of the Council's role based on its enabling legislation as well as recent legislative changes; and profiles of Council members. We conclude the report with the Council's 2002 recommendations to address identified systemic challenges and enhance transition services to youth with disabilities and the activities that have occurred in 2003 to begin to address these recommendations.

We appreciate your ongoing support of services for youth with disabilities. Working together, we can achieve our common goal of assisting youth with disabilities in achieving their employment, education and training and independent living goals.

Sincerely,

Dr. Randy J. Dunn (Interim)
State Superintendent
Illinois State Board of Education

Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
Secretary
Illinois Department of Human Services

ILLINOIS COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBERS

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Designee: Douglass Day, Ph.D.

Illinois Community College Board

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission

The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) was established in 1990 by the Interagency Coordinating Council Act, 20 ILCS 3970, to facilitate collaboration among state agencies and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. The Council is charged with: gathering and coordinating data on services for transition-age youth with disabilities in transition from school to employment, post-secondary education and training, and community living; providing information, consultation, and technical assistance to state and local stakeholders; assisting state and local stakeholders in establishing interagency transition agreements; conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and providing in-service training to consumers in developing and improving awareness of transition services.

This report is a compilation of varying transition specific activities conducted by the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council; Sub-committees of the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council; and local Transition Planning Committees, local school districts, Illinois State Board of Education and the Illinois Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Central sections of this year's report include: a review of the systemic challenges, recommendations and accomplishments that offset the barriers identified in last year's Annual Report; funding gaps, an identified barrier to systemic change will be addressed by each member agency in its own section, member agency's profiles and transition-related activities; a summary of Transition Data Collection Activities; and lastly, future challenges and recommendations.

Accomplishments/Summary

There are two prime areas notable for bold review. Each has numerous areas of accomplishments.

1. The 2002 ICC Annual Report identified a set of systemic barriers that contribute to the difficulty young adults with disabilities face in their efforts to pursue their personal goals of becoming productive, contributing member of their communities. The Council established six workgroups based on the identified barriers from the 2002 report. These workgroups focused on: data coordination and evaluation of

transition outcomes, training and technical assistance, interagency collaboration, public education and outreach and collaboration with higher education institutions. The Data Coordination and Evaluation of Transition Outcomes group combined as the responsibilities and membership on each was so similar. The progress of each of these committees is outlined below.

Data Coordination and Evaluation of Transition Outcomes

- Identified contacts for each member agency responsible for data collection, review, or analysis.
- Surveyed member agencies to determine data collection uses, and needs in order to improve transition data collection activities.
- Data was collected and compiled to determine common data elements currently required by member agencies. Recommendations were made to include significant data elements in the revised data collection system through Illinois State Board of Education's Funding and Child Tracking System (FACTS).
- Collected and analyzed existing outcome data elements as collected by member agencies.

Training and Technical Assistance

- Identified contact information for all member agencies responsible for training and staff development.
- Planned and scheduled interagency training based on the needs each ICC member agency representative identified for their agency.
- Initiated discussion regarding an annual interagency transition conference for all transition stakeholders.

Interagency Collaboration

- Drafted and published, *"The Illinois Transition Programs and Services: Working Together to Improve Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities and their Families,"* a compendium of each member agencies' transition related services, eligibility requirements and contact information. (See Appendix A)
- Conducted an Interagency Training that initiated a process to strategize about the necessary community and agency partnerships and linkages to the educational and social service systems that are required to plan and provide comprehensive coordinated transition services for adolescents and young adults.
- Collaborated with pre-existing training venues to explore training for educators responsible for transition planning based on the expressed needs of each ICC Member Agency.

Public Education and Outreach

- Identified a public relations contact for each member agency.
- Developed and launched the Interagency Coordinating Council website.
- Surveyed member agencies to determine and offset barriers to effective communication.

Collaboration with Higher Education Institutions

- Developed and disseminated survey to all Illinois community colleges.
 - Drafted a white paper encompassing issues and recommendations for increased collaboration between secondary and post-secondary education.
 - Joint training between community colleges and the Division of Rehabilitation Services produced greater understanding and interagency agreements.
2. The State of Illinois has been collecting data on students with disabilities about post-secondary needs for more than twelve years. It is expected that various state agencies will benefit from the provision of data to strategically plan for service needs of people with disabilities in the local communities. In many instances, Transition Planning Committees (TPCs), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and other state agencies use the information to enhance understanding of local transition service needs for high school students and projected post-school adult services needs. Following are the major findings from the data:
- Transition data collection activities resulted in responses from thirty-five of thirty-eight Transition Planning Committees at the time of collection.
 - According to stated IEP goals, students are more inclined to choose post-secondary education goals than employment goals.
 - Some 3,553 students projected to graduate in 2003 sought paid employment at a job in the regular business community. 1,234 students required paid employment and may or may not require pre-vocational skills that involves intensive or long-term support services matched to what an individual needs to remain employed.
 - The percentage of students graduated in 2003 who anticipated enrolling in a community college program was significantly higher compared to those projected to require community rehabilitation and day training programs. Eighty-six percent of the students identified a goal to attend a college program, opposed to 14 percent whose stated goal was to attend a community rehabilitation program of day training program.
 - Young adults with disabilities still face significant difficulties in the following areas: securing jobs, accessing postsecondary education, living independently and fully participating in their communities.
 - Transition Planning Committees identified twenty-six key areas of unmet transition service needs in their local communities.

This year's report includes the complete, "Annual Transition Summary Report," a compilation of the statewide data collection activity, and the Interagency Compendium – "Illinois Transition Programs and Services: Working Together to Improve Transition Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities and their Families."

It is hoped that this expansive report will support state, regional and local areas in identifying and coordinating programs, services and supports that insure positive and seamless transition of young adults.

INTRODUCTION

Every year, more than 125,000 youth in Illinois graduate from high school eager to take their place in the adult world. The majority of these youth successfully make this transition, achieving their employment, post-secondary education and community living goals. All too often, the outcomes for some youth with disabilities are not as cheerful. Many youth with disabilities confront barriers that make it very difficult, if not impossible, for them to pursue their personal goals of becoming productive, contributing members of their communities. As a result, young adults with disabilities, compared to their non-disabled peers, experience increased rates of: dropping out of high school and post-secondary education or training, under-employment and unemployment, illiteracy, incarceration and dependence on government benefits.

The barriers experienced by youth and young adults with disabilities reflect broader systemic challenges facing the service delivery system that provides transition planning and services. Last year's report identified the challenges, and made recommendations. This year's report continues the theme, inclusive of a review of the sub-committee assigned to address each challenge and the progress made to date. The systemic challenges identified in the previous year's annual report are identified in this report and will be addressed in subsequent reports until each are resolved.

They are:

Fragmented Service Delivery System

Illinois has a myriad of programs and services designed to help meet the needs of youth with disabilities. Unfortunately, these programs and services are not woven into a cohesive service delivery system, resulting in significant services gaps for youth with disabilities and costly duplication of services. This is compounded by multiple definitions of transition, disability, and youth, as well as dissimilar enrollment and eligibility criteria and procedures. Lack of interagency coordination and collaboration continues to be a significant barrier to the development and implementation of effective transition services to youth with disabilities.

ICC response:

The Sub-Committee(s) that addresses this issue are:

- Data Coordination and Evaluation of Transition Outcomes
 - Surveyed member agencies to determine current disability terminology, labeling and definitions used to reference disabilities. This query was an attempt to research the variation of terminology used to define people with disabilities with the expectation that all agencies, (at least in the State of Illinois) will eventually use common language to describe the populations we serve.

- Training and Technical Assistance
 - Conducted an interagency training that initiated a process to strategize about the necessary community and agency partnerships and linkages to the educational and social service systems that are required to plan and provide comprehensive coordinated transition services for adolescents and young adults.
 - Drafted and published, *“The Illinois Transition Programs and Services: Working Together to Improve Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities and their Families,”* a compendium of each member agencies’ transition related services, eligibility requirements and contact information. (See Appendix A)

Lack of a Comprehensive Communications Strategy

While numerous agencies and organizations serving youth with disabilities disseminate information on transition planning and services, there is no statewide, comprehensive strategy to communicate this information to targeted audiences. Without a comprehensive communications strategy, it is impossible to effectively deliver a consistent message about the importance of transition and share information with targeted audiences throughout the state.

ICC response:

The Sub-Committee(s) that addresses this issue are:

- Public Education and Outreach
 - Identified a public relations contact for each member agency.
 - Developed and launched the Interagency Coordinating Council website. <http://www.isbe.net/iicc/>
 - Surveyed member agencies to determine and offset barriers to effective communication.

- Training and Technical Assistance
 - Conducted an interagency training that provided an opportunity for all 12 member agencies to come together, learn together and ask questions of each other. This networking opportunity was invaluable in establishing, building and enhancing interagency relationships/partnerships.
 - Drafted and published, *“The Illinois Transition Programs and Services: Working Together to Improve Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities and their Families,”* a compendium of each member agencies’ transition related services, eligibility requirements and contact information. (See Appendix A)

Insufficient Training and Technical Assistance

Although limited training and technical assistance related to transition are offered in some areas of the state, there is no statewide transition training initiative or technical assistance function to provide consistent support to professionals throughout the state who serve youth with disabilities. As a result, many professionals at the local level lack sufficient skills and resources to adequately implement effective transition planning and services.

ICC response:

The sub-committee that addressed this concern is:

- Training and Technical Assistance
 - Conducted an interagency training to increase awareness of transition issues for youth with disabilities, families and providers; to emphasize the importance of partnering with youth, families and agencies’ to identify ways to improve collaboration between agencies; to familiarize participants with the spectrum of transition services in Illinois and to promote strategies for partnering with communities, agencies, educational and social systems necessary to plan and provide comprehensive coordinated transition services for adolescents and young adults.
 - Drafted and published, *“The Illinois Transition Programs and Services: Working Together to Improve Outcomes for Youth with Disabilities and their Families,”* a compendium of each member agencies’ transition related services, eligibility requirements and contact information. (See Appendix A)
 - Identified contact information for all member agencies responsible for training and staff development.
 - Initiated discussion regarding an annual interagency transition conference for all transition stakeholders.
 - In the process of collaborating with pre-existing training venues to explore training for educators responsible for transition planning.

Lack of a Valid, Reliable Statewide Data Collection System

It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain valid data related to youth with disabilities in Illinois. Factors that contribute to the lack of data availability include: variations in the primary populations served among ICC member agencies, variations in methodology in data collection and reporting, and incompatibility of computer hardware and software. Without a statewide data collection system, it continues to be impossible to assess the status of transition in Illinois.

ICC Response:

The Sub-Committee that addresses this issue is:

Data Coordination and Evaluation of Transition Outcomes

- Contacts for each member agency responsible for data collection, review, or analysis have been identified. (See Attachment A)
- Member agencies were surveyed regarding data collection, use and needs. (See Attachment B)
- Data has been compiled and common and significant data elements have been included for insertion for a revised data collection system.

Insufficient Communication between Secondary and Post-Secondary Education

While IEPs are required for all eligible high school graduates with disabilities, in some cases, students are not counseled to pursue higher education, or if they are, they often come to colleges and universities without adequate documentation of their disabilities. Factors contributing to the lack of communication between secondary and post-secondary education institutions include funding constraints, a lack of inter-institutional coordination, the varying documentation requirements among four year post-secondary institutions, and frequently, poor transition planning.

ICC Response:

The Sub-Committee that addresses this issue is:

Publication Education and Outreach

- Survey developed and disseminated to all Illinois community colleges.
- Drafted a white paper encompassing issues and recommendations for increased collaboration between secondary and post-secondary education.

Insufficient Post-Secondary Supports and Services

There is a shortage of community services and supports for youth with disabilities who transition from school to adult life, including employment and post-secondary education supports, housing, health care and transportation. Factors contributing to this inadequacy include funding constraints, a lack of state or federal mandates requiring provision of adult services, lack of interagency coordination, and, in many cases, poor transition planning.

- Member agencies identified significant funding gaps. Refer to specific section for in-depth reporting by agency.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL: CATALYST FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) was created in 1990 to facilitate this broad collaborative effort and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities. Established by the Interagency Coordinating Council Act, 20 ILCS 39701, the ICC is charged with:

- Gathering and coordinating data on services for secondary youth with disabilities of transition age;
- Providing information, consultation, and technical assistance to state and local stakeholders;
- Assisting state and local stakeholders in establishing interagency transition agreements;
- Conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and
- Providing periodic in-service training to consumers in developing and improving awareness of transition services.

As a focal point for collaboration, the ICC is also charged with working in partnership with the Illinois Department of Human Services, school districts throughout the state and local transition planning committees. The continued cultivation of these vital linkages is critical to the Council's effectiveness in facilitating needed change in the transition service delivery system.

Recent legislative changes have formally established the ICC's internal leadership, expanded its membership and broadened its scope. With passage of HB 3192 in 2001, the Secretary of the Illinois Department of Human Services and the State Superintendent of Education were designated as co-chairpersons of the Council. In addition, the ICC's membership was expanded to include the State Board of Higher Education. The ICC's role was also broadened to become more outcome-driven with the Council mandated to conduct an annual statewide evaluation of outcomes of former students with disabilities and their unmet needs.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL MEMBER PROFILES

The Interagency Coordinating Council Act named each member agency to be part of the Council because of the roles each agency plays in providing services to youth and young adults with disabilities. The following profiles offer a brief description of each member's mission and its role related to transition.

Illinois Board of Higher Education

Mission: The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) is the coordinating agency responsible for statewide policy and planning for Illinois higher education, as well as budgeting, approval of new programs, and review of existing programs at public two-year and four-year colleges and universities. The IBHE is also responsible for approval of new programs and review of existing programs at some independent institutions located in Illinois and out-of-state. As part of its mission, the Board analyzes needs of the state and campuses and makes budget recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly for public colleges and universities and the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, which awards student financial aid. The Board's guiding policy document, *The Illinois Commitment*, articulates six goals of Illinois higher education related to strengthening economic development; improving teaching and learning in K-12; keeping college education affordable; increasing the number and diversity of citizens in college; accountability for quality of academic programs and student learning; and accountability for improving productivity and cost-effectiveness.

Role related to transition: The Board has implemented policies that promote access and diversity for all college students, faculty and staff, including those with disabilities. The Board has established an advisory committee on issues related to serving college students with disabilities. The committee is currently focusing on web-accessibility, developing a common method for reporting data and assessing services provided and transition from high school to college. In recent years, greater focus and emphasis have been placed on programs and services for those with disabilities. Each year, the IBHE submits an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on underrepresented groups in Illinois higher education. The report provides information, including expenditures, programs and services for students and staff with disabilities and identifies the number of students served by each campus. Colleges and universities provide a growing and extensive array of programs and services for students and staff with disabilities. The programs are the focal point for organizing and providing services to students as well as coordinating services and transition programs with outside agencies.

Number Served: The IBHE has not yet received FY 2003 reports from all public universities. Among the public universities that submitted their reports, the number of students with disabilities served varied significantly, ranging from 88 students at Governors State University to 677 students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Illinois Community College Board

Mission: The mission of the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) is to administer the Public Community College Act in a manner that maximizes the ability of community colleges to serve their communities. The ICCB promotes cooperation within the system and accommodates Illinois initiatives that are appropriate for community colleges. The ICCB strives to be accountable to Illinois' students, employers, lawmakers and taxpayers in its provision of high-quality, accessible, cost-effective educational opportunities for the individuals and communities they serve.

Role related to transition: National reports indicate that community colleges are the institutions of choice for students with disabilities. According to Barnett and Li (1997), more than 53 percent of postsecondary education students attend community colleges. The reasons for their choices most likely relate to convenience and support systems close to their homes. As more students with disabilities are being mainstreamed in secondary schools, community colleges are making a concerted effort to meet their needs.

Number Served: In 2003, approximately 9,900 students with disabilities enrolled in all 48 community colleges

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

Mission: The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) is the lead state agency responsible for improving the competitiveness of Illinois in the global economy resulting in growing, prosperous industries, high quality jobs and world-class communities. DCEO provides information, assistance and advocacy to facilitate and advance the economic development process in partnership with Illinois' communities, businesses, and our network of public and private service providers.

Role Related to Transition: DCEO administers the federal employment and training program known as the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). One of WIA's target populations is economically disadvantaged youth, ages 14 - 21. Service strategies prepare youth for employment and/or postsecondary education through strong linkages between academic and occupational learning. Types of services include: assistance in achieving academic and employment success, training opportunities, mentoring opportunities and support services. Local communities provide youth activities and services in partnership with the WIA One-Stop system and under the direction of local Workforce Investment Boards.

To strengthen and enhance services in the One-Stop system for persons with disabilities, DCEO is participating in a USDOL/Social Security Administration demonstration project known as the Disability Program Navigator project. The nine one-stops participating in the Disability Navigator project in Illinois are striving to increase their capacity to successfully serve persons with disabilities. The Disability Navigator provides expertise and serves as a resource person to all One-Stop partners about such programs as Social Security Disability

Insurance, Supplemental Security Income disability, and blindness beneficiaries; Social Security Administration (SSA) work incentives and other employment support programs, including the Ticket to Work programs and SSA demonstration projects. The Navigator is an expert on workforce development issues and policies impacting persons with disabilities who are seeking employment, skill development, job retention assistance, or career advancement through the One-Stop system; is a resource to the workforce investment community within their service area ensuring the availability of comprehensive knowledge on Federal, State, local and private programs that impact the ability of persons with disabilities to enter and remain in the workforce; and facilitating universal access to the One-Stop system for persons with disabilities. The Navigator position is intended to increase employment and self-sufficiency for persons with disabilities by linking them to employers and by facilitating access to supports and services that will enable the transition to employment.

Number Served: In FY 2003, 1,914 youth with some type of disability were served throughout the state by local agencies administering Illinois' Workforce Investment Act program.

Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

Mission: The mission of the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD) is to promote change that ensures that people with developmental disabilities have the same opportunities as others in the community. The ICDD specifically addresses issues related to the following areas as defined in federal legislation: quality assurance, education/early intervention, childcare, health, employment, housing, transportation, recreation and community supports. The Council is dedicated to improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities through advocacy, systemic change and capacity building.

Role related to transition: The ICDD has a unique role in the area of transition. First and foremost, the Council addresses issues that relate to all areas of a person's life over the entire life span of the individual. In addition, the Council, through demonstration projects, has the opportunity to address specific issues, conduct pilot projects, learn from those pilot projects and expand that learning to the system for long-term change. The ICDD uses a variety of strategies to address system change, including: outreach; training; technical assistance; supporting and educating communities; interagency collaboration and coordination; coordination with related councils, committees, and programs; barrier elimination; systems design and redesign; coalition development and citizen participation; informing policymakers, and demonstration of new approaches to services and supports.

During the past decade, the ICDD has been involved in specific activities, which have assisted in setting the course for transition. In the mid-1990s, the Council undertook several projects to define outcomes for people as a way to describe success in a person's life. Through interviewing people throughout Illinois and asking them what was important in their lives, several documents were developed that defined the outcomes people wanted at

certain times in their lives. Transition was one of the areas funded by the ICDD. As a result of this work, specific transition outcomes were defined by students with developmental disabilities and their families across the state.

Number Served: While the ICDD does not provide direct services, its activities indirectly contribute to enhanced services to countless Illinois youth with disabilities.

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Mission: The mission of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFS) is to: protect children who are reported to be abused or neglected and to increase their families' capacity to safely care for them; provide for the well-being of children in our care; provide appropriate, permanent families as quickly as possible for those children who cannot safely return home; support early intervention and child abuse prevention activities, and work in partnerships with communities to fulfill this mission.

Role related to transition: IDCFS provides transitioning services for wards under age 18 through permanency planning. Based on the individual wards' service needs and the county juvenile court practice, guardianship may be released at age 18 and through age 21. Individuals, who are wards age 18 through 21, who generally have a developmental disability, mental illness, medical and other disabilities, also require permanency planning and receive transitioning services. IDCFS transitioning services are tailored to meet individual needs based upon disability and include independent living classes, skill building programs, independent living placements, mentors, case management, pre-employment training, on-the-job training and support, counseling, and community integration. When appropriate, IDCFS collaborates with IDHS to transition wards age 18 through 21 for services following IDCFS guardianship.

Number Served:

22,000 wards as of March 2004
5,900 wards ages 14 – 18
2,000 wards ages 19 – 22
4,850 wards have a permanency goal of independence
1,400 wards are residing in independent living programs, including supervised independent living, transitional living and college/employment
8,100 wards have some type of recorded disability with the most common (4,600) being “child needs mental health services”
2,600 wards have developmental disabilities

Illinois Department of Corrections

Mission: The mission of the Corrections School District (School District 428) is to enhance the quality and scope of education for inmates and juveniles within the Department of Corrections consistent with age, commitments, and sentence. School District 428 accomplishes this mission by ensuring that state and federal resources are appropriately used in aiding committed persons to restore themselves to constructive and law-abiding members of the community.

Role related to transition: School District 428's role in transition includes early and meaningful transition planning as a positive influence on students' post-school success and independence. The transition process is individualized, building upon each student's interests, strengths, experiences and goals for the future. Educators are knowledgeable in all areas of transition services in the training of School District 428. School District 428 begins the process when students reach age 14 and continues through their 21st birthday, or until they are transitioned into their respective communities. It is the goal of School District 428 that each student will be able to transition into their respective communities with vocational, technical or professional skills in place.

Number Served: The Department of Corrections' School District 428 served 1,783 students in special education and 1,079 students receiving transitional services during FY 2003. This represents an increase of 374 students of transition age over the previous year.

Illinois Department of Employment Security

Mission: The Illinois Department of Employment Security supports economic stability in Illinois by paying unemployment benefits, maintaining reserves and collecting taxes to support those benefits, connecting employers with qualified job seekers, and providing economic information to assist in career planning and economic development.

Role related to transition: IDES promotes employment opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities and encourages employers to consider qualified individuals with disabilities for their job openings. IDES cooperates with the Department of Human Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) in providing services and activities to individuals with disabilities. Services available through this cooperative effort include evaluation of the clients' employment capabilities, appropriate work environment, and identification and development of suitable job openings. Employment counseling through DRS and the IETCs helps clients recognize vocational options, develop a plan to achieve employment goals, overcome barriers to employment and adjust to the work environment. Job ready individuals with disabilities receive consideration for suitable openings in the job matching process.

Number Served: In FY 2003, 15,308 people with disabilities registered with IDHS with 343 of these individuals placed in employment. This represents an increase of 2,085 over the number of individuals with disabilities who registered with IDHS in FY 2002.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities

Mission: The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)/Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) provides a full array of quality, outcome-based, person- and community-centered services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families in Illinois.

Role related to transition: Although there is no mandatory role in statute specific to transition, DDD does provide independent service coordination to children who are aging out of the school system and wish to transition to adult services. Service coordination includes the review of comprehensive assessments, participation in the development and completion of an individual's service plan, and linkages to services. Support Services include in-home supports for the individual and family, respite services, vocational evaluation and training, and residential services.

Number served: A total of 4,300 individuals age 14 - 21 were served in FY 2003.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services

Mission: The Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS)/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) is the lead state agency serving individuals with disabilities. DRS offers a wide range of programs and services to assist people with disabilities and their families in achieving their employment, education and independent living goals. A key partner in the State of Illinois' transition effort, DRS is committed to continue investing resources in effective transition services to ensure that students with disabilities have the knowledge, skills and experience they need to successfully transition from school to the world of work.

Role related to transition: DRS provides a continuum of services to students with disabilities that typically start during the latter part of the first year of high school. These services, which are tailored to meet the needs of the individual student, include: career exploration; community-based training and work experience; supported employment services; job training and placement; independent living skills training; vocational evaluation, counseling and guidance, as well as educational and financial planning.

DRS implements these services using a number of resources. The Secondary Transition Experience Program (STEP) prepares high school students with disabilities for transition to employment through school-supervised work experiences, vocational evaluation and work adjustment. DRS transition specialists play an invaluable role in providing DRS resources to schools, students and their parents. Through its VR program, DRS assists youth with disabilities who are no longer in high school in preparing for and obtaining quality

employment that pays a living wage and offers opportunities for advancement. DRS' NEXT STEPS Program assists parents and caregivers of children and youth with disabilities, as well as special education teachers, in effectively planning services and advocating for children with disabilities.

VR counselors collaborate with DRS University Coordinators, and colleges/universities throughout the state to assist students with disabilities in preparing for and obtaining quality employment that pays a living wage and offers opportunities for advancement. This program aids in students making a seamless transition from high school to college programs. In FY 2003, DRS provided services to 3,959 students attending post-secondary college training through on-going cooperative interagency agreements with colleges.

DRS is also responsible for coordinating the establishment of local Transition Planning Committees (TPCs) throughout the state. These local TPCs identify current transition services as well as unmet needs, assist in the development of transition interagency teams to address students' needs, facilitate an on-going exchange of information, develop customer training programs in the local community, and assist in staff training for transition planning and student needs assessment. Currently there are forty-one local Transition Planning Committees serving 94 of the 102 counties in Illinois.

Number Served: A total of 17,907 youth with disabilities (STEP and non-STEP transition cases) were served in FY 2003, an increase of 1,321 students over FY 2002.)

Illinois Department of Public Aid

Mission: The Illinois Department of Public Aid (IDPA) is dedicated to improving the health of Illinois' families by providing access to healthcare and enforcing child support payment obligations for Illinois' children. IDPA provides medical assistance to low income, elderly and individuals with disabilities, and ensures that children receive the financial support from absent parents to which they are entitled.

Role related to transition: IDPA's role is to provide information about health care programs administered by the department to Illinois youth with disabilities who are leaving the secondary educational system to pursue employment or post-secondary education/training. This includes medical assistance programs available under the Kid Care and Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities (HBWD) programs, as well as medical assistance for individuals with disabilities.

Number Served: An estimated 1,050,000 children are being served through the Medicaid and Kid Care program.

Illinois State Board of Education

Mission: The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) will provide leadership, advocacy, and support for the work of school districts, policymakers and citizens in making Illinois education *Second to None*.

Role related to transition: ISBE is generally responsible for the educational policies and guidelines for public schools, pre-school through grade 12, special education services for eligible students age 3 through 21, and vocational education in the State of Illinois. ISBE conducts monitoring activities to ensure compliance with federal and state special education requirements and is mandated under IDEA to establish a mechanism that ensures delivery of special education and related services, including transition planning and service delivery.

Number Served: A total of 96,546 students ages 14 - 21 received special education services in the 2002/2003 school year, representing an increase of 3,623 students over the 2001/2002 school year.

UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children

Mission: The UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC) serves children and youth with special healthcare needs from birth to age 21. DSCC provides care coordination activities, working with families to help children with disabilities, and those who have conditions that may lead to disabilities, develop and reach their full potential.

Role related to transition: DSCC's role in transition is to assist youth with special healthcare needs through the transition process, utilizing the expertise of agency staff in healthcare transition and also helping families connect with other community resources. Agency staff members' who have been trained on transition issues and resources, assist youth with disabilities in achieving the highest levels of health status, employment, independent living and community integration.

Number Served: DSCC is currently serving 2,504 youth with special healthcare needs ages 14 - 21, representing an increase of 25 people over FY 2002.

INDIVIDUAL STATEWIDE AGENCY TRANSITION ACTIVITIES

While broad collaborative efforts have been somewhat limited, agencies serving youth with disabilities throughout the state have been engaged in a variety of activities designed to strengthen service delivery and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities.

Illinois Board of Higher Education Activities

In August 2002, the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approved a report, *Gateway to Success: Rethinking Access and Success for a New Century* that, among other

conclusions, recognized the necessity to develop “an effective higher education disability policy.” In particular, *Gateway to Success* stressed three components of information systems: (1) consumer information about institutional programs and services; (2) campus and statewide data on the number and types of students with disabilities enrolled and being served and also persistence until graduation and post-college placement; and (3) access to information on instructional materials and alternative formats, and web accessibility.

Illinois higher education has taken a number of steps to address recommendations regarding students with disabilities in *Gateway to Success*. These include:

- Establishing an IBHE Advisory Committee to examine issues related to the development and implementation of more effective information systems, improvement of transition from high school to college of students with disabilities, and review budgetary structures and level of support;
- Sponsoring a conference on Accommodative Teaching and Assistive Technology in 2002 at Northern Illinois University;
- Evaluating the effectiveness of student services in assisting students with disabilities;
- Establishing a \$1.3 million Special Education Assistive Technology Center at Illinois State University in 2001 to investigate ways that technology can improve the lives of persons with disabilities, to provide training in assistive technology, and to serve as an information clearinghouse on assistive devices;
- Surveying services provided to students with disabilities (ICCB);
- Encouraging individual agreements with ORS that identify both the types of services and portion of funding of services that each campus and ORS will support; and
- Developing and supporting model consumer information website that campuses can use to improve their websites.

The 2004 annual IBHE *Report to the Governor and General Assembly on Underrepresented Groups in Illinois Higher Education* will summarize public colleges’ and universities’ responses to questions related to their providing students with disabilities with: (1) a full range of services; (2) appropriate outreach services to students in high school; and (3) a climate and context that assures students with disabilities their needs will be addressed in a proper and timely manner. The IBHE will work with Illinois Community College Board and Illinois State Board of Education to develop a mechanism to encourage all high schools to assist students with disabilities who plan to attend college meet college requirements such as documentation that colleges and universities need to provide full services when students with disabilities are enrolled.

IBHE will increasingly “look for opportunities to encourage, sponsor and organize conferences, workshops and other forums that addresses transition issues that seek to develop common priorities, strategies and approaches” to provide better and more effective services to students with disabilities. The Board will also promote collaboration among colleges and universities as well as collaboration with relevant state agencies such as

ISBE, ICCB and ORS.

Implementation of IBHE goals will be subject to availability and unpredictability of state funds.

Illinois Community College Board

ICCB and the Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services held three joint regional workshops to address issues and concerns in serving students with disabilities. Key issues that evolved from the workshops include the following:

- Establishing a better communication process especially for documentation and testing among providers serving students with disabilities.
- Working toward uniform interagency cooperative agreements among the providers.
- Providing seamless transition for students with disabilities from high school to higher education.
- Using the key issues and information gained from the workshops, a uniform agreement is planned for the northern region of the state with implementation to begin July 1, 2004. Expansion of the uniform agreement would include the other two regions of the state for FY 2006. Another future endeavor includes a meeting of Illinois State Board of Education, Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Board of Higher Education and Division of Rehabilitation Services to discuss the transition issue.

In January 2003, the Illinois Community College Board contracted with the Public Policy Institute of Southern Illinois University to conduct an initiative on transition planning for students with disabilities. During the remainder of the fiscal year, the Institute worked with ICCB staff in coordinating with community colleges, the Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities, local transition Planning Committees, and other appropriate groups to identify issues and gaps in service planning for student with disabilities between secondary and post-secondary education and employment. During this period a survey was developed to seek information about how community colleges can strengthen their partnerships with the disability community to better meet student needs. Implementation of the study was postponed until FY 2004 in order to accommodate a revised request from the Illinois Board of Higher Education for the annual Underrepresented Groups Report.

Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities Activities

The Illinois Council on Development Disabilities (ICDD) initiated a two-year project in 1999 to facilitate inclusion of students with disabilities in Education to Careers (ETC) activities by providing training and technical assistance to all 39 of Illinois' ETC partnerships and the ETC State Steering Committee. As part of this effort, the ICDD developed a curriculum on inclusion of students with disabilities and disseminated the material to all ETC partnership committees, ETC coordinators, the Illinois State Board of Education and other stakeholders.

More recently, the ICDD has been involved in several information-gathering initiatives. The

ICDD brought together a group of stakeholders in February 2001 to define their vision for the ICC. The results of the focus group have been shared with ICC members. The ICDD also completed the development of a database template for Illinois in fall 2002. Through this database, information related to transition could be collected at the local, regional and state levels. The ICDD included recommendations for collection and use of the data in its database template report.

During the past year several investments have been made in the area of advocacy training that have an impact on developing leadership skills in high school age students. Two projects initiated during this year have as their outcome to help transition-age youth learn leadership skills and to use those skills to achieve a goal that they define in their IEP.

Illinois Department of Corrections

The Illinois Department of Corrections School District 428 is actively involved in the transitioning of students from the educational environment within the district to the educational and work environments within the communities. School District 428, in cooperation with the Department of Corrections, is working on a program that will support students from the time they enter this program to their departure. Significant work is beginning in the areas of regionalization. This will allow the students in our juvenile facilities to remain, for the most part, in their home regions. More contact with family and community services will be available to these students.

Students are encouraged to use the assistance of Life Skills Centers located throughout the state in various locations. Help in obtaining housing, employment as well as continuing education is made available to our former students.

Ongoing progress is being made to increase the collaboration of community-based networks to help former students remain vital members of their community.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Developmental Disabilities Activities

Although DHS/DDD primarily provides funding and services for adults with developmental disabilities, DDD has been engaged in a number of activities during FY 2003 that had impact on transition-age youth with developmental disabilities. DDD is guided by a 3-year Strategic Plan which encourages development of increased residential alternatives for individuals aging out of the school system, increasing capacity for individuals to participate in supported employment programs, and enhancing general service coordination guidelines and outcome requirements with input from the Illinois State Board of Education and other entities. DDD has also disseminated family needs surveys throughout the state to help determine both current and future needs from the standpoint of the individual with DD. This information will be used by DDD for system evaluation and planning. During FY 2003, DDD provided limited service coordination to children seeking selected DD

services where current services were unstable, where the child was unable to access services and had few family or natural supports, or during periods of major transition.

Pre-Admission Screening (PAS) agencies also provided transition assistance to many children as they reached age 18 which included education and outreach regarding service opportunities, providing assessments and program eligibility determinations, and referral, linkage, and follow-up involving adult services.

Other programs provided, which can involve children with developmental disabilities include hourly in-home respite provision to assist families with care giving on an as-needed basis, a Family Assistance and Support program which provides assistance where a child is at risk of an out-of-home placement, and the Family Assistance Program (FAP) which pays a monthly stipend to help with the costs of caring for a child with a severe mental disability.

DDD has also regularly participated in the Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL) Project coordinated by the Illinois State Board of Education by providing information about services provided through the Division.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation

The Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) assists high school students who have disabilities plan for their futures after high school graduation through our **Transition** and **STEP** (Secondary Transitional Experience Program) programs. There are Transition Counselors located in 51 local offices and thirty-five transition specialists who work with individual schools and school districts to identify eligible students for the Transition and STEP programs. DRS counselors often serve as consultants as well as provide vocational counseling for high school students with disabilities as they make their transition plans. Prior to graduation from high school, referrals are made to adult service providers within the 51 offices.

In an effort to improve outcomes for young people with disabilities, DRS has participated with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) in the Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL) Project through in kind staff support.

DRS is committed to aiding the implementation of exemplary secondary transition practices throughout Illinois. DRS coordinates the establishment of local Transition Planning Committees (TPCs) throughout the state. Through staff support, there is an increase in the number of local Transition Planning Committees. Currently there are forty-one committees, serving ninety-one of the 102 counties in Illinois. These TPCs identify current transition services and unmet needs, assist in developing transition interagency teams to address students' needs, facilitate an on-going exchange of information, develop local customer training programs, and assist in staff training for transition planning and student needs assessment. The agency provided financial support to twenty-five local Transition Planning Committees that requesting funds through the Mini-Fund Proposal initiative.

Quarterly Regional Consortium meetings are conducted in five regions in Illinois. The regions are identified as, Northern ~ Cook, South Cook, North Central, Central Illinois and Southern Illinois.

Illinois Department of Public Aid

In the past few years, IDPA has been able to expand health care services to people beyond the Medicaid income threshold (100 percent of the Federal Poverty Level, FPL). Kid Care, Family Care, and Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities are several health care programs that offer services to people whose incomes exceed the FPL. Despite this substantial service expansion, some people with disabilities with higher incomes still have difficulty receiving needed health care services.

Illinois State Board of Education

Training

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) awarded a three-year Model Outreach grant to ISBE that began October 1, 2003. The Model Outreach project is titled "Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living" (TOTAL). ISBE, IDHS/DRS, IDHS/DDD and UIC DSCC provide in-kind staff supports to provide the training. All grant funds are expended for training materials and expenses. During FY 2003 approximately 100 individuals, including transition age students, parents, school personnel and community service providers, received training on four research-based best practices in transition planning and service delivery, including Federal and State Transition Requirements, Person-Centered Planning, Promoting Student Self-Determination and Transition: Centerpiece of the IEP.

A second outcome from the grant was an annual transition summit. ISBE, in partnership with the IDHS/DRS, the University of Illinois RCEP Project, the Southern Illinois University RCEP Project and the Illinois Association of Rehabilitation Facilities conducted a statewide transition summit. Teams of community members participating in the summit attended the Person-Centered Planning and Promoting Student Self-Determination modules of the TOTAL Project training. Approximately 200 individuals, including transition age students, parents, school personnel and community service providers, attended the summit.

The TOTAL Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator provided transition training to an additional 250 individuals, including students families, special education staff, vocational coordinators, and administrators through conferences, in-service training and a statewide youth summit.

Monitoring and Complaint Investigation

ISBE conducted 22 special education monitoring visits at various schools throughout Illinois during FY 2003 to address compliance with state and federal special education requirements, including transition. Following the monitoring visits, schools are required to submit a plan of correction and work with ISBE monitoring staff to correct any deficiencies. In addition to the monitoring visits three parental complaints regarding transition services were investigated and corrective actions were implemented as applicable.

Special Education State Plan

The ISBE Continuous Improvement Plan for Special Education (Part B) includes a goal of increasing the number of students with disabilities who receive a standard high school diploma. There was a 3 percent increase in the number of students with disabilities who graduated with a standard high school diploma from 69 percent in the 2001/2002 school year to 72 percent in the 2002/2003 school year.

UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children

Information and Resources

In FY 2003, DSCC continued to focus on implementing transition efforts statewide through the development and modification of health care transition materials. Because transition planning encompasses everything needed to assist individuals with disabilities in achieving the highest levels of health status, employment, independent living and community integration, a wide range of informational materials continues to be disseminated to staff, youth with disabilities and their families. Transition tools and web resources have been made available on DSCC Internet pages for families and providers. Transition related articles have been included in DSCC's Family Newsletter. Materials and information continue to be updated. Additionally, new materials, such as the ones being developed for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) with lower cognitive abilities, are developed, as a need is determined. Resource information is frequently added to the DSCC website.

Evaluation

Evaluating services prior to and after statewide implementation was planned. a Transition Survey was disseminated to a random selection of 386 DSCC youth and young adults between the ages of 14 and 21. This questionnaire was developed to obtain a baseline evaluation in the following areas: health care transition, helpfulness of DSCC assistance and transition materials, student status, agencies and other program services assistance, employment status, self-care information, future planning for independent living, recreation/social involvement and knowledge of laws. The written analysis of the survey data completed in FY 2003 indicated the following areas of needs: continued efforts in teaching independence skills, locating resources to promote socialization, collaboration with other agencies and a continued need for transition efforts with families and CYSHCN. The

same survey will be disseminated again to a random selection of youth and young adults in January 2005 to assist in evaluation after statewide efforts were implemented.

Outreach

Outreach activities included efforts to promote all aspects of transition with a concentration on health care transition by participation in Transition Planning Committees (TPCs) locally and regionally, presentations to outside agencies and at conference sessions for families, youth and agency staff. Two staff members continued their participation on the statewide Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL) Project. In addition to these outreach activities, the establishment and strengthening of collaborative relationships with outside agencies and projects occurred. Along with these activities, ongoing outreach events and networking are continually occurring. DSCC has been involved in planning the Interagency Coordinating Council Transition Conference for member agencies this year.

Transition training for health care professionals has become part of the DSCC Medical Home Initiative. DSCC has also participated in transition presentations for allied health professionals. DSCC staff continues to meet and network with health care professionals to help identify adult practitioners who are willing and able to care for adults with special health care needs.

Technical Assistance

Transition training and technical assistance continues to be an area of focus for DSCC. Care Coordinators are increasing their efforts in assisting families and youth to address the issues needed for planning transition to adulthood with the youth. To support the Care Coordinators' efforts, two staff members have been assigned to provide ongoing technical assistance and improved awareness of community resources for all 13 DSCC regional offices.

Illinois Department of Human Service-Division of Rehabilitation Services/Illinois State Board of Education Joint Transition Activities

- **Data Collection and Report**

ISBE and DHS/DRS have conducted joint transition data collection efforts for over a decade. ISBE disseminates forms and instructions to assist schools in compiling data on existing and projected service needs for students age 14 and older who have Individualized Education Programs. Each school submits this data to the area Transition Planning Committee (TPC) which is responsible for synthesizing and submitting the data to DHS/DRS. Each year, DHS/DRS prepares and disseminates an annual summary of all transition information gathered through this process. This data is utilized at the state level in writing grant proposals and is also used at the local level to plan for future service delivery needs.

- **Interagency Agreement**

ISBE and DHS/DRS are currently re-negotiating an existing interagency transition agreement to clarify agency roles and set clear expectations so as to better provide transition services for children and young adults in Illinois.

INDIVIDUAL AGENCY TRANSITION ACTIVITIES FUNDING GAPS

A lack of funding affects almost all areas of service delivery to students ages 14 – 21 who have disabilities and to young adults as they leave secondary school. ICC member agencies have identified the following funding gaps:

Illinois Community College Board

The Illinois Community College Board as part of its programs and services for under represented groups distributed Special Populations Grants to community colleges to provide special or extra services helping students initiate, continue, or resume their education or to offer instruction to remedy or correct educational deficiencies. Special Populations' funding aided those students with social, physical, developmental, or academic disabilities that make it difficult for students to adapt to a college environment, primarily designed for persons who do not possess these characteristics. In FY 2003, the governor terminated the grant and overall funding of \$13 million for the Special Populations Grant thus placing a hardship on community colleges to serve students with disabilities. To date the grant and funding has not been reinstated.

Illinois Department of Child and Family Services

For DCFS wards funding gaps relate primarily to accessing developmental disabilities resources in a timely manner, i.e., when the individual needs them. Waiting lists and a lack of appropriate resources in some areas of the state become barriers for the populations that the agencies were designed to serve.

Illinois Department of Human Services/Division of Rehabilitation Services

The Division of Rehabilitation Services expends funds on behalf of transition of youth from high school to adulthood through the Secondary Transitional Experience Program (STEP) and with Transition Specialists and High School Liaisons. Though cost of living and service supports have increased, there has not been an increased in budget allocations. As a result, this agency is limited in the program enrollment that prepares students with disabilities for transition to employment and community participation. Additional resources would make allowances for the following initiatives that lead to successful transition:

- The agency established a three - year goal to increase the number of students served by 300 percent. Additional funds in the area of transition will assist with serving these students. These additional dollars can expand for ancillary services such as job coaching, training and support.
- DRS is in support of additional postsecondary training opportunities to bring additional rehabilitation professionals into the state who can provide students with visual, hearing and other impairments training in the areas of independent living and mobility skills training needed for employment opportunities.
- Illinois lacks College Prep programs designed to help students with disabilities meet the academic, social and other challenges they will face in college.
- Transition Planning Committees are non-funded mandates. DRS is fortunate to be able to provide limited funds to support their endeavors. Additional funding would result in greater advocacy, resources, collaboration, etc. A recommendation was made to increase from \$500.00 to \$2,000.00 the amount of funds annually allocated to local Transition Planning Committees.
- It is essential that DRS staff, parents, students and school staff have current information regarding transition services and planning. Funds are needed to offer on-going training and staff development activities.
- A process to follow up with graduates to determine and record their outcomes and to develop new plans for those who fail to meet their intended goal is essential to determining the long term success of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) System. Additional resources are needed in order to conduct this tracking.

Illinois Department of Public Aid

Gaps in Medicaid related funding are primarily related to those whose incomes exceed the maximum income threshold. For the most part DPA programs operate under an income threshold. Some programs are at 100 percent of the federal poverty level, some at 133 percent, and some up to 200 percent of the FPL. Since Medicaid programs are an entitlement, all those who are eligible receive the services, but some who do not qualify due to income need services.

Illinois State Board of Education

There were 3,911 schools in 891 school districts serving 72,554 students ages 15 - 21 in special education during the 2002-2003 school years in Illinois. Under state and federal law schools must plan for the transition from high school to adult life for students receiving special education beginning at age 14. There are thousands of teachers in Illinois who are responsible for transition planning and services for these students.

Illinois was initially awarded a five year federal Transition System Change Grant in October 1996 through the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education (OSEP). The grant funded training and technical assistance regarding research based secondary transition practices to seven (7) pilot projects. Due to a roll over of unexpended funds the project was able to continue for a sixth year. Training and technical assistance were

expanded beyond the seven pilot projects during the sixth year.

In October 2003 Illinois was awarded a three-year federal outreach grant to expand the training and technical assistance efforts that began under the Transition System Change Project. Under the current project, entitled Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL), 20 sites in Illinois receive training and technical assistance to implement research based secondary transition practices school wide. In addition, a series of self study multi media materials are being produced and a cadre of trainers are being trained through a series of train-the-trainer workshops.

The funding for this project ends September 30, 2005. While the 20 sites will have been fully trained and will have fully implemented the learned practices school wide, most schools and teachers will remain untrained in the areas of best practice on which the grant focuses. Newly educated trainers will also require ongoing assistance and support as well. Without the grant funding ISBE will experience a funding gap and will be unable to continue to provide these services to Illinois stakeholders.

University of Illinois Division of Specialized Services for Children

The Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC) provides care coordination and assistance with payment for specialized medical services for medically eligible children from birth to 21 years of age. Approximately one-third of DSCC clients are between 14 and 21 years of age. Care coordination services provided to this group include assistance with access to transition services and collaboration between agencies. Since DSCC Care Coordinators must work collaboratively with other agencies, the funding cuts and staff reductions occurring in those agencies have limited our ability to connect youth and families to needed transition services. For example, individuals with disabilities frequently require assistive technology to facilitate independence such as barrier free lifts to help with access within an independent living environment, augmentative communication devices to assist with self advocacy, environmental controls and adaptive switches to help with independence, modification to steering controls to help with transportation and many other devices and equipment to help with job performance, health care and independent living. With financial constraints, these resources are available on a more limited basis and eligibility criteria for present funding sources are becoming more restrictive.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

While ICC member agencies have undoubtedly made progress in improving services to youth with disabilities, a number of systemic challenges within the service delivery system continue to impede the development of an integrated continuum of services tailored to meet the needs of youth with disabilities. These challenges continue to include:

Fragmented service delivery system

The programs and services designed to meet the needs of youth with disabilities are not woven into a cohesive service delivery system, resulting in significant services gaps for youth with disabilities and costly duplication of services. This is compounded by multiple definitions of transition, disability, and youth, as well as dissimilar enrollment and eligibility criteria and procedures. Lack of interagency coordination and collaboration continues to be a significant barrier to the development and implementation of effective transition services to youth with disabilities.

Lack of a comprehensive communications strategy

While numerous agencies and organizations serving youth with disabilities disseminate information on transition planning and services, there is no statewide, comprehensive strategy to communicate this information to targeted audiences. Information shared with parents, youth with disabilities and professionals varies widely and an often time does not reach many individuals. Consequently, far too many parents of youth with disabilities are not aware of their rights and their child's rights. Other parents do not fully understand the importance of transition planning and/or are not aware of available transition resources or service options. In addition, a large number of professionals at the local level do not fully understand transition planning and service delivery. Without a comprehensive communications strategy, it is impossible to effectively deliver a consistent message about the importance of transition and share information with targeted audiences throughout the state.

Insufficient training and technical assistance

Limited training and technical assistance related to transition are offered in some areas of the state based on availability of staff and resources or perceived need for training and technical assistance. However, there is no statewide transition training initiative or technical assistance function to provide consistent support to professionals throughout the state who serve youth with disabilities. As a result, many professionals at the local level lack sufficient skills and resources to adequately implement effective transition planning and services. It will be extremely difficult to enhance professional development without the development of a statewide training and technical assistance system.

Insufficient communications between secondary and post-secondary education

While IEPs are required for all eligible high school graduates with disabilities, in some cases, students are not counseled to pursue higher education, or if they are, they often come to colleges and universities without adequate documentation of their disabilities. In these circumstances, colleges and universities make every effort to document the need for services but must arrange for testing prior to service delivery. The student, a community organization or an educational institution might pay for assessments. Factors contributing to the lack of communication between secondary and post-secondary education institutions include funding constraints, a lack of inter-institutional coordination, the varying

documentation requirements among four year post-secondary institutions, and frequently, poor transition planning.

Insufficient post-secondary supports and services

There is a shortage of community services and supports for youth with disabilities transitioning from school to adult life, including, but not limited to, employment and post-secondary education supports, housing, health care and transportation. Factors contributing to this inadequacy include funding constraints, a lack of state or federal mandates requiring provision of adult services, lack of interagency coordination, and, in many cases, poor transition planning.

Lack of a valid, reliable statewide data collection system

While a sub set of the populations served by each ICC member agency includes youth with disabilities, the primary population served varies from agency to agency. Under current agency data collection systems, gathering data related to the sub set of youth with disabilities is difficult at best and impossible at worst. Many individuals are counted multiple times while others may not be counted at all. For example, the Illinois State Board of Education Funding and Child Tracking System indicate that 92,923 students with disabilities ages 14 - 21 received special education services during the 2001/2002 school year. A sub set of that population of students also received services from other member agencies who count those same students as part of the population they serve. On the other hand, young people with disabilities entering post-secondary education or accessing services through the Illinois Department of Employment Security are only included in the disability data if they identify themselves as having a disability and many do not do so. Compounding these difficulties is a plethora of computer hardware and software, which varies from agency to agency.

- Fragmented Service Delivery System
- Lack of a Comprehensive Communications Strategy
- Insufficient Training and Technical Assistance
- Insufficient Communications Between Secondary and Post-Secondary Education
- Insufficient Post-Secondary Supports and Services
- Lack of a Valid, Reliable Statewide Data Collection System
- Funding Gaps

Interagency Coordinating Council members share a common goal of improving outcomes for youth with disabilities. With a renewed commitment to strengthen collaboration among all agencies and organizations that serve youth with disabilities, the Council offers the following recommendations to address the identified systemic challenges and enhance transition services to youth with disabilities.

- Create a comprehensive statewide seamless transition service delivery system for

adolescents and young adults with disabilities to ensure better outcomes for youth with disabilities.

- ❑ Continue to devise a comprehensive communications system to facilitate information sharing and ensure that consistent messages about transition planning and services are disseminated to targeted audiences. This strategy will also enable the ICC to assess and address barriers and recommendations identified by various stakeholders.
- ❑ Develop expanded training and technical assistance for professionals, regional and local Transition Planning Committees, and other stakeholders serving youth with disabilities, as well as youth with disabilities and their parents.
- ❑ Continue to develop a statewide, interagency data collection system that produces valid, reliable and useful data to all stakeholders (local and statewide). This system should provide a continuum of meaningful transition-related information about all students with disabilities as well as post-school outcomes of adults with disabilities. All ICC member agencies are encouraged to develop data sharing agreements, which include information about students served, and outcomes.
- ❑ Review existing transition interagency agreements at regular intervals to identify needed agreements as well as agreements that should be enhanced and/or renewed.
- ❑ Develop a mechanism to ensure that ICCB, IBHE, and ISBE collectively assist high schools make a concerted effort to aid high school graduates who have disabilities meet the specifications required by colleges and universities to provide complete and full services during the students' post-secondary experience.
- ❑ All ICC members should work cooperatively to improve collaboration and increase the funding level of transition programs and services.

Implementation of these recommendations will eliminate much of the frustration and failure in the lives of secondary students with disabilities and their families and provide the youth of Illinois with disabilities a solid foundation on which to build life long success.

