

Illinois Coordinating Council on Transition

The Status of Transition Services for Students with Disabilities in Illinois Annual Report 2005-2006 to The Governor and General Assembly

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

**Christopher Koch, Ed.D., State Superintendent
Illinois State Board of Education**



ILLINOIS INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL ON TRANSITION

Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council

November 2008

IL Board of Higher Education

IL Community College Board

IL Council on Developmental
Disabilities

IL Department of Children and
Family Services

IL Department of Commerce and
Economic Opportunity

IL Department of Employment
Security

IL Department of Healthcare
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IL Department of Human Services

Division of Developmental
Disabilities

Division of Mental Health

Division of Rehabilitation
Services

Department of Juvenile Justice

Illinois State Board of Education

University of Illinois
Division of Specialized Care
for Children

Dear Governor Blagojevich and Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council on Transition (IICC), we are pleased to submit this report summarizing the Council's activities and accomplishments during the 2005-2006 school year.

This report reflects the Council's dedication of continued collaboration to strengthen the transition service delivery system and improve outcomes for youth with disabilities throughout Illinois.

On June 30, 2006, Illinois' TOTAL Project (Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living) funded from a grant by the United States Department of Education ended. The TOTAL Project has made great strides in educating and assisting families, state agencies and local districts in their approach and expectations for working together to facilitate transition for students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs.) However, there is still much to be done to further the services and supports that will benefit youth with disabilities.

We appreciate your support of services for youth with disabilities. There is a need for dedicated funding for the delivery of Transition Services. Working together, we can achieve our common goal of aiding youth with disabilities to achieve their education and training, employment, and independent living goals.

Best Regards,

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

Christopher Koch, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
Illinois State Board of Education

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Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (IIICC) Status of Transition Services in Illinois Annual Report 2005-2006

Identity and Purpose

Identity

The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (IIICC) 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 IIICC is statutorily mandated by state to provide advice and policy guidance to the Governor, General Assembly, and the State Board of Education with respect to special education and related services for children with disabilities and the unmet needs of children with disabilities.

Purpose

The Council is charged with:

1. 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;
2. providing information, consultation, and technical assistance to state and local stakeholders;
3. assisting state and local stakeholders in establishing interagency transition agreements;
4. conducting an annual statewide evaluation of student transition outcomes and needs; and
5. providing in-service training to consumers in developing and improving awareness of transition services.

For as long as she can remember, Jessica Riechers dreamed of becoming a teacher. She never gave up her dream even when complications from brain surgery left her paralyzed on her left side when she was 16. Although she was out of school for months, Jessica worked hard so she could graduate with her classmates.

Jessica has gotten closer to achieving her dream: she is an elementary education student at Illinois State University and looks forward to graduating with a degree in Elementary Education. She smiles as she talks about her future teaching career, "If I can do that every day of my life, then my life is golden."

Council Membership

Membership

The membership of the Council is established by statute and includes thirteen (13) state agencies.

Illinois State Board of Education *

State Superintendent:
Dr. Christopher Koch Ed.D.
Member: Susan Walter

Illinois Board of Higher Education

Executive Director: Judy Erwin
Designee: Ocheng Jany

Illinois Community College Board

President/CEO: Geoffrey S. Obrzut
Designee: Andrea Berryman

Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities

Director: Sheila Romano, Ed.D.

Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

Director: Byron Samuels
Designee:

Illinois Department of Economic and Community Opportunity

Director: Jack Lavin
Designee: Lisa D. Jones
Member: Randolph Boschulte

Illinois Department of Corrections

Director: Roger Williams
Designee:

Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Rehabilitation Services *

Secretary: Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
Designee: Marva Campbell-Pruitt

Illinois Department of Employment Security

Director: Brenda Russell
Designee: Mitch Daniels

Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities

Secretary: Carol L. Adams, Ph.D.
Director: Geri Johnson
Designee: Terry Braidwood

Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Mental Health

Secretary: Carol L. Adams
Director: Geri Johnson
Designee: Alan Dietrich

Illinois Department of Health and Family Services

Director: Barry S. Maram
Designee: Pat Curtis

UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children

Director: Charles N. Onufer, M.D.
Designee: Darcy Contri
Member: Therese Rhodes

*Mandated co-chairperson

Council Actions and Accomplishments

- 1) The Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (IICC) continues to collaborate and meet annually with the Illinois State Advisory Council on the Education of Children with Disabilities (ISAC). At the 2006 meeting the IICC members reported on the progress of the Illinois statewide plan initiated at the National Leadership Summit on Improving Results: Policy and Practice Implications for Secondary and Postsecondary Education, Transition and Workforce Development for Youth with Disabilities held in Washington DC and attended by an Illinois team. The plan looks at ten different priorities and promotes: aligning agencies' missions, policies, procedures, data, resources, accountability, responsibility and shared roles.
- 2) IICC and the ISAC provided feedback on the updated draft of Illinois State Board of Education Performance Plan for Special Education, Part B for 2005-2010.
- 3) IICC provided support to the development of the Summary of Performance, new statewide IEP and Transition Planning process and forms. Electronic IEP and Summary of Performance at time of graduation will be implemented to assist with data collection required by the Office of Special Education Programs. The 2004 changes to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) along with the proposed changes to Illinois' Special Education Regulations implementing the IDEA reauthorization were reviewed.
- 4) IICC members attended public hearings and provided testimony to support the Illinois proposed changes for the 226 Rules regarding: Eligibility, Graduation or Completion of Program; and the Illinois code to exceed the federal regulations pertaining to the content of the IEP "Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 14 ½."
- 5) IICC members again participated on the steering committee and subcommittees for the second annual statewide transition conference: "Real Options: Making the Move." A health care track for health care providers was added to this year's conference. The Second Annual Statewide Transition conference was held in October with over 500 participants including educators, vocational rehabilitation counselors, social workers, physicians, nurses, care coordinators, community agency representatives, families, youth and others.

Perceptions on the Status of Transition in Illinois

Critical Issue Identified for Discussion

The Council identified **Transition to Community Living** as priority for discussion in this Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly.

Transition to Community Living

Young people, parents and caregivers often tend to focus primarily on the goal of graduation or departure from high school. They belatedly realize that future planning to ensure a smooth transition to adult life has not been addressed. Through lack of coordination, limited resources and confusion regarding rule changes and eligibility, many young people with disabilities, remain in their homes without the supports or health care coverage provided during the previous school years.

Many youth with disabilities, especially those with significant and developmental disabilities are not aware that they have many options related to housing in order to live more independently in the community. They may believe their only choice is to remain in the family home. Some youth may not have the independent or supported living skills necessary to successfully live more independently in the community. Additionally, some young adults and family members are not aware that other people with similar disabilities have successfully transitioned to more independent living arrangements with the full agreement and support of their families.

The Funding and Child Tracking System (FACTS) collects information on anticipated post-secondary services needed upon high school completion for all students receiving special education services. Results for 2005-06 School year indicates 69,844 students have anticipated needs for adult independent living support provided including but not limited to services that will assist persons with disabilities to perform daily living activities, transportation required for employment, and or schooling, self advocacy trainings and interagency linkages.

The Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) database is a listing of individuals with developmental disabilities and their service needs. The information in this data base can help the state of Illinois track how many individuals with developmental disabilities have had their needs met and how many are still in need of services. There are approximately 11,000 individuals currently in need of services/recipients of services. The information can also give information for future planning and budgeting to meet the needs of individuals with developmental disabilities living in Illinois. According to the November 2006 report the following needs related to transition to community living have been identified.

PUNS Data By Support Needed

11/30/ 2006

Type Of Support Needed	EMERGENCY	CRITICAL	PLANNING	TOTAL
Personal Support	932	2774	1281	4987
Behavioral Supports	722	1640	710	3072
Assistive Technology	320	1065	569	1954
Adaptations to Home or Vehicle	187	652	359	1198
Nursing Services--In-Home Intermittent	146	268	182	596
Other Individual Supports	439	963	676	2078
Transportation--Trip/Mileage	809	2209	1163	4181
Reimbursement				
Other Transportation Service	561	1791	852	3204
Support to Work at Home	26	115	69	210
Support to Work in Community	352	1497	815	2664
Out-of-Home Residential--Less than 24-Hour	150	513	259	922
Out-of-Home Residential--24-Hour	985	1956	1137	4078
Unduplicated Count Of Records With Current Needs	1886	5283	4043	11,212

The DRS Independent Living Units provide funding to 21 Centers for Independent Living (CILS) centers throughout the state. Many youth and young adults received direct services from CIL. The four core direct services provided through the centers include: Information and referral; advocacy; peer mentoring and counseling; and independent living skills training

Building self-advocacy skills is an important part of the transition process and knowledge of the laws in place to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities can help build self-advocacy. The **UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children 2005 Youth Survey** results demonstrate that a larger percentage of younger aged youth are becoming familiar with these laws as compared to those surveyed in 2002. However, in both groups, 34% for youth age 14-17 and the 44% of young adults age 18-21, results tell us that less than half of the respondents are knowledgeable of these laws.

Transition planning includes promoting community integration/community involvement. Youth and young adults were asked about their participation in clubs and community activities. The results indicate a higher participation was found in the younger age group 64% as compared to the older age group, 44%. These results are similar to those in 2002 even though an increase in planning efforts has been focused on encouraging and linking youth/young adults to community activities.

The Community's Perception:

Transition Planning Committees, representative of local Vocational Rehabilitation staff, local school personnel, community providers and parents are required to submit an annual status report to the Interagency Coordinating Council, with the results to be included in the report to the Governor and General Assembly. Notification was mailed to 39 TPCs requesting that they access the on-line survey tool. They were directed to collaborate with members of their committees and provide one collective response. Thirty-seven respondents provided their perception of the status of transition services in Illinois.

The final response to the Survey follows:

	Response %	Response Total
a. Very Poor	7.9%	3
b. Poor	47.4%	17
c. Satisfactory	39.5%	15
d. Very Good	5.3%	2
e. Excellent	0%	0

Member Agency Updates

We asked each member agency of IICC to provide an update from its respective agency relative to their mission, accomplishments, and overall initiatives impacting transition aged youth.

Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)

Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE)'s mission includes promoting and facilitating affordability of college education as well as access and success of underrepresented groups in higher education, including students with disabilities, through policies, planning, budgeting, new degree program approval, review of existing degree programs, and grants administration. To achieve its goals for serving students with disabilities the IBHE: annually prepares and submits to the Governor and the General Assembly an Underrepresented Groups report documenting accomplishments, progress and challenges; created a Disabilities Advisory Committee consisting of campus experts on disabilities; passed a resolution urging public universities and community colleges to continuously improve online access for students with disabilities; recommended that colleges and universities develop and implement effective means to improve transition of students with disabilities from high school to college; collects annually data and best practices for serving students with disabilities from community colleges and public universities; funded a Special Education Assistive Technology Center at Illinois State University; collaborates with the Illinois Community College Board and other state agencies, as well as other entities to maximize services for the disabled.

The IBHE has made a number of accomplishments in 2005 and 2006. It awarded several grants to colleges and universities: to create a model program for transition to employment for graduates with disabilities; to develop disability access metrics for postsecondary education to improve the quality of data collected; to establish a functioning web accessibility consortium, consisting of community colleges and public universities; to create a transition and inclusion camp for students with disabilities for training to meet the needs of multicultural and visually impaired students; for adapted technology to support students through accessible print media. The IBHE staff has worked with IICC's Education Committee to plan a symposium with public universities' representatives about the need to establish more transition specialist certificate programs in Illinois. Additionally, the Board staff continues its collaboration and partnership with **disabilityworks**, a non-profit organization, working with the City of Chicago, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, state agencies and other entities to promote and improve employment for people with disabilities.

Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)

www.iccb.state.il.us

National reports indicate that community colleges are the institutions of choice for students with disabilities; therefore, community colleges are making a concerted effort to meet their needs. During fiscal year 2004, Illinois Community Colleges served approximately 11, 639 students with disabilities. Graduation rates for students with disabilities were 18.7 percent. These results are higher than the results achieved in four of the last five years. Collaboration among agencies promotes the changing needs of students and provides for more successful outcomes. Besides serving on the Interagency Coordinating Council, the ICCB is represented on the Disability Advisory Committee, disabilityworks, and Statewide Essential Skills Work Group. Noting the lack of solid criteria for reporting and the need to include more web accessibility for students with disabilities, the Illinois Board of Higher Education enacted the Disability Metrics pilot project. Two community colleges were chosen as pilot sites for this project. Students with disabilities services appear to be increasing while funding continues to decrease. In order to help address this issue, the ICCB introduced the Student Success Grant which is intended to provide needed supplemental services to assist students in achieving their college goals. In order to accommodate students with disabilities, a more stable and state-wide source of funding is needed.

The Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities (ICDD)

www.state.il.us/agency/icdd/

The Illinois Council on Developmental Disabilities continued its work related to systems change throughout the lifespan of individuals with developmental disabilities. Two Council initiatives related to youth, education and transition were completed recently.

Through an investment with the Council, youth in 12 different schools learned self-advocacy skills, lead their IEP/transition planning meetings and over 65 achieved a goal that they identified in the IEP. Since parents play such a critical role in the lives of students, one of the added features of this initiative included work with parents to learn how to support their son/daughter in making choices for themselves.

One of the primary roles that the Council plays in Illinois is that of systems change. For the past five years the Council has been involved with two university teacher preparation programs on an initiative designed to change the way pre-service teacher training occurs so that graduates are able to teach all students in their classrooms, including students with diverse learning needs. The culmination of this initiative resulted in a University Summit for all teacher preparation programs in the state. Through the work of the pilot project of the Council, over 20 teacher preparation programs came together to discuss how the lessons learned from these projects could be incorporated into teacher preparation programs throughout Illinois. The impact of these changes and the skills of future teachers will benefit students in all areas of their lives.

Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES)

www.ides.illinois.gov

Illinois Department of Employment of Security (IDES) 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.

IDES promotes employment opportunities for individuals 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/activities to individuals with disabilities. Services available through this cooperative effort include evaluation of the client's employment capabilities, determination of the appropriate work environment, and identification and development of suitable job openings. Employment counseling through Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and the Illinois Employment and Training Centers (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:

5,260 people with disabilities (of all ages) were placed in employment through IDES services during 2006.

Healthcare and Family Services (HFS)

www.hfs.illinois.gov

The HFS role in providing transition services is an indirect but important one. HFS funds health screening, immunization, school based and other health services to Illinois children. The HFS All Kids program offers affordable healthcare to children of all ages. Transition planners may more easily address the child's other needs, knowing that their current healthcare needs are addressed. Without appropriate, accessible and ongoing medical care, effective future planning can be very difficult. Additionally good healthcare practices may reduce or even eliminate the impact of certain disabling conditions. More than one million children were enrolled in HFS funded healthcare programs last year.

The Health Benefits for Workers with Disabilities (HBWD) program provides healthcare coverage to employed individuals with disabilities, ages 16-64, whose incomes do not exceed 200% FPL. Often referred to as the Medicaid Buy-In program, HBWD was developed to encourage people with disabilities to use their talents and skills in the workplace without losing healthcare benefits. Transition planners may assist youth with disabilities in training for employment knowing that HBWD enrollment will secure the healthcare needs. HBWD participants pay an average monthly premium of \$48 to receive health benefits. Last year about 800 Illinois residents with disabilities received healthcare coverage through HBWD.

Illinois Department of Human Services Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD)

www.dd.illinois.gov

This year, the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) instituted a new user-friendly website dedicated to ensuring that people with developmental disabilities and their families get the information they need to take advantage of the services provided through the Division. The web address is www.dd.illinois.gov Information may also be obtained by calling 1-888-DD-PLANS or 1-866-376-8446 (TTY).

DDD also continued the Prioritization of Urgency of Need for Services (PUNS) database. Registering with PUNS is the first and most important step individuals with developmental disabilities and their families can take to ensure DDD is aware of service or support needs. Enrollment in PUNS should be conducted if needs are anticipated within the next 5 years. Although completion of a PUNS form does not guarantee eligibility for services or their availability, it ensures tracking can begin for potential services. Information is available on registering with PUNS utilizing the contact information above. To date, more than 11,000 individuals are registered in PUNS. Approximately 15% of those individuals are age 17 or younger. 17% of registrants are seeking services within 90 days of initial PUNS completion; nearly 50% within 1 year following initial PUNS completion.

In perhaps the most significant effort impacting transition age individuals, DDD developed and submitted 3 Waiver applications for approval to the Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). These Waivers help provide funding for many of the DDD services and supports as identified in the PUNS database above. State funding is matched by Federal monies serving to both enhance service delivery, and lighten the financial burden to the State. The 3 Waivers are as follows:

- 1) Renewal application for the Adult Waiver--this application seeks to extend the current waiver for individuals 18 years of age and older for an additional 5 years. Approximately 14,000 adults are expected to receive a variety of services, including residential services, in the first year.
- 2) **NEW** Initial application for the Children's Residential Waiver. This Waiver applies to individuals aged 3-22 years old seeking residential services. The Waiver application requests approval initially for a period of 3 years and is expected to serve 175 children in its first year.
- 3) **NEW** Initial application for the Children's Support Waiver. This Waiver also applies to individuals aged 3-22 and provides for a variety of non-residential services and supports. Also requested initially for 3 years, 600 children are expected to be served in the first year.

As previously stated, the Children's Waivers may include participants through the age of 21. Adult Waiver services may start at age 18. This four-year transition period is designed to enable participants in the Children's Waivers to transition more easily to other programs including other Waivers for adults, as appropriate, or ICF/MR services. It is expected that most participants will choose to transition as they exit the special education system. The State has designed the Children's Waivers so that, as much as possible, eligibility criteria, service definitions, provider qualifications, case management roles and responsibilities, and service implementation are consistent across Waiver programs, particularly those providing home-based supports to children and adults. During the course of Waiver services, each participant is assigned an Individual Service and Support Advocate (ISSA) who serves as an independent advocate, participates in support plan development, and monitors satisfaction, health, safety, and well-being. The ISSA will assist the participant and family during the transition period. The ISSA will inform the participant and family about adult service options and ensure necessary eligibility screenings are completed. For other adolescents not receiving children's DD Waiver services, the same agencies will determine eligibility for adult DD Waiver services and assist with linkage and referral and, if appropriate, funding requests.

Illinois Department of Human Services
Division of Mental Health Services (DMH)
www.dhs.state.il.us/mhdd/mh/

The Division of Mental Health (DMH) continues to make significant strides towards creating a mental health service system for young adults with serious mental illness or chronic mental illness who are transitioning to adulthood. During the past year DMH's Adult Services and Child and Adolescent Services each implemented initiatives designed to produce outcomes that will identify some of the transition service needs of young adults; as well as inform DMH on the programming gaps within the current mental health and social service systems. Specifically, the following occurred within the last year:

- Adult Services signed a MOU with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to collaborate and establish protocols and mechanisms to enable the smooth transition of DCFS wards with serious mental illness and/or serious emotional disturbances into adult DMH services. The initial outcome of the MOU is a pilot in which qualifying 18 – 21 year old wards are linked to one of two residential providers. Thereafter, DMH and DCFS staff responsible for implementing the pilot and pilot project providers will review the progress of those youth and oversee appropriate system changes as needed to achieve pilot goals and MOU stipulations.
- Child and Adolescent Services through its Child and Adolescent Advisory Council established the Transition Services Work Group to advise DMH on development of services for youth transitioning from child and adolescent mental health services to adulthood. This statewide group has recruited members representing DCFS, ISBE, DRS, CBHA, residential providers, consumer advocacy groups, C & A mental health providers, adult services mental health providers and consumers. Through its committee structure the Work Group has embarked on identifying service needs and gaps, staff and consumer training opportunities, and system development and policy possibilities.
- Child and Adolescent Services awarded \$100,000 Transition Services for Youth grants to one (1) provider in each of the five (5) DHS regions. Awardees successfully responded to a Request For Proposal (RFP) that was developed in collaboration with the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership. Through this initiative transition services will be provided to two populations: youth with Severe Emotional Disturbance between the ages of 16-18 who are aging out of the child and adolescent mental health system, and youth with mental health needs of any age who are returning from a juvenile justice facility to the community. Additionally, providers will develop coordinated services or link the youth to these services which will, at minimum, include education, health, mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare, vocational services, housing, skill building and personal development. The Transition Program is designed to be individualized, culturally inclusive, and provided in the most normative and least restrictive environment.

Illinois Department of Human Services
Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
www.dhs.state.il.us/ors/

DRS helps high school students with disabilities plan for their future with services provided through the Transition Program and the Secondary Transition Experience Program (STEP). The counselors work closely with transition specialists housed in high schools, staff in individual schools and school districts, and community partners to help students achieve their employment, post-secondary education and independent living goals.

DRS facilitates the enhancement of local transition services by supporting Transition Planning Committees (TPCs). DRS is responsible for coordinating and sustaining local Transition Planning Committees (TPCs) in Illinois. These TPCs identify existing resources and unmet needs, facilitate an on-going exchange of information, and develop local customer training programs.

Quarterly Transition Consortia are convened to address transition issues, provide networking opportunities, and facilitate information-sharing among regional TPC members. Vocational Rehabilitation staff, educators, post secondary schools, community partners, state agencies, parents and consumers are actively involved in these consortia.

DRS joins with many partners to offer a wide variety of transition outreach activities throughout the year. In October 2006, DRS co-sponsored the Second Annual Statewide Transition Conference. More than 500 participants attended the conference, which focused on supporting the successful transition of students and encouraging the creation of person-centered goals for young people with disabilities.

Numbers Served:

- 20,494 transition students were served in FY2006, including 17,1128 STEP students and 3,366 non-STEP students
- IDRS provided 150 STEP contracts serving approximately 600 high schools
- Thirty-nine active TPCs served 96 Illinois counties with 18 TPCs receiving mini grants from DRS
- More than 700 participants attended 14 Regional Transition Consortia in FY2006.

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
www.isbe.net

The Transition Outreach Training for Adult Living (TOTAL) Project, a three-year Model Outreach grant awarded to ISBE in 2003 by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS), is working to complete the final evaluation report in December 2006. Though we acknowledge much work to do in the area of transition, ISBE is anticipating evaluation results that demonstrate a measurable impact across all of the Project's evaluation components and validation of the need for ongoing technical assistance and training across all stakeholder groups. One of the work products of the TOTAL Project was a series of nine training modules formatted to be used with stakeholder groups or as a self-teaching method. The nine modules are available via the ISBE website and include Federal and State Transition Requirements, Person-Centered Transition Planning, Promoting Student Self-determination, Transition: Centerpiece of the IEP, Implementation of Secondary Transition Best Practices, Interagency Collaboration and Transition, Adult Life Outcomes for Students with Disabilities: A World of Opportunity, SSI and Transition Planning, and Health and Medical Issues in Transition Planning.

ISBE has developed a plan to sustain statewide access to technical assistance, training, information sharing and implementation of exemplary transition practices. A commitment has been made to

transition the role of the current Technical Assistance and Training Coordinator to a Transition Consultant working with the Special Education Services Division. This commitment to a dedicated transition position will enable continued interagency collaboration regarding transition issues; the opportunity to update and refine the nine training modules to align with IDEA 2004 and the Illinois State Performance Plan; ongoing opportunities for statewide technical assistance, training and information/resource sharing; transition-specific support to ISBE's special education technical assistance projects; and, intra-agency collaboration to provide information regarding state of the art research, literature and practices in transition planning, and promoting improved outcomes for students with disabilities.

University of Illinois Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC)

www.uic.edu/hsc/dscc/

DSCC continues to focus on health care transition for youth/young adults with chronic illnesses/disabilities. Improvements in technology increasingly allow more children with chronic and disabling conditions to reach adulthood. These youth and young adults require care that is uninterrupted, high quality, and developmentally appropriate as they move from pediatric to adult health care providers. Health care providers have an important role in preparing pediatric patients and their families for the changes that occur when moving from pediatric to adult health care settings. This may include informing them of the differences and assisting them with developing new skills to meet the expectations of the adult health care arena. DSCC impacts change in the health care system through education and training to increase awareness of the important role physicians and other health care providers have in the transition process. Youth with Special Health Care Needs (YSHCN) often need more help planning for adult life including referrals to resources and services that can help optimize their health. DSCC staff presented transition information for physicians, residents and allied health care providers at Lutheran General Children's Hospital, Loyola University Medical Center, Children's Memorial Hospital, Rush University Medical Center, and Medical Home Quality Improvement Teams. In addition, DSCC provides outreach/presentations on health care transition to other community partners such as students in the McHenry County West Central Coop, and health care providers at the Sickle Cell Center in Chicago.

DSCC participation in Regional Transition Planning Consortiums allows staff opportunities for networking, improved collaboration, and information resource sharing. DSCC staff participated on the steering committee and subcommittees for the second annual statewide transition conference, "Real Options: Making the Move." DSCC staff developed an additional track focused on health care transition. The track was offered to physicians and allied health care workers. This new track was well received and will be continued at subsequent conferences.

The Real Options conference provided learning opportunities for youth, families, educators and other professionals in the areas of employment, education, community and self empowerment. DSCC supported the cost of the conference including lodging and meals for youth in our program and their families to attend. Several DSCC care coordinators also attended at the expense of the agency. Over 1,838 youth/young adults have received DSCC care coordination services for help with individualized transition planning, skill development, resource, referral and information. The 2005 survey of youth served by DSCC identified three ongoing needs to help youths and their families reach their goals. These needs are: promoting self care, health care management and self advocacy skills; enhancing community integration through community involvement to reduce social isolation; and educating youth and their families on the availability of transition resources. DSCC continues to target efforts to meet these needs in an effort to improve outcomes for youth/young adults as they transition to adulthood.

Everyone is proud of Marcos Alonso. He is the first in his family to graduate from high school. He has also overcome some monumental barriers to become an independent, self-sufficient young adult.

Marcos started working with a Transition Specialist five years ago when he was in high school. He was connected with services to address his learning disability, his speech difficulties, and his limited English proficiency. The specialist partnered with a job coach from AERO Cooperative who helped Marcos succeed in a work-training program at the Midway Hotel Center. Today, Marcos works full-time as an apprentice chef at the Hotel Center's Marriott.

New Legislation Pertaining to Transition

The reauthorized *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*, signed on December 3, 2004, became PL 108-446. In accordance with 20 U.S.C. 1416(b)(1), not later than one year after the date of enactment of the reauthorized *IDEA*, each state is required to have in place a performance plan evaluating the state's implementation of Part B and describing how the state will improve such implementation. There are four separate indicators specific to transition. This report provides the status of three of the four.

- Percent of youth aged 16 and above with an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals.

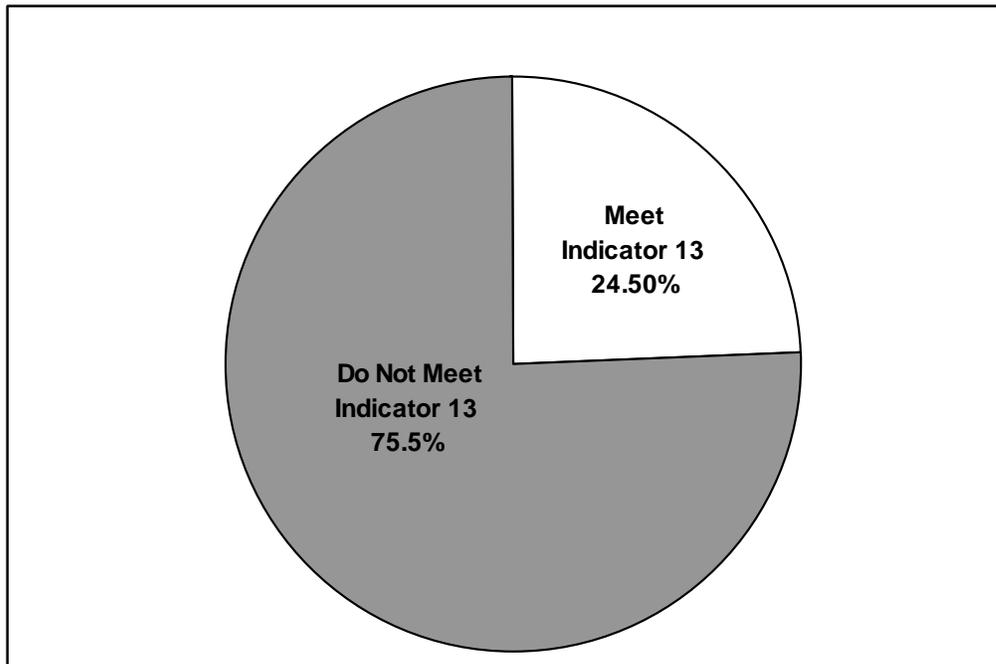
School districts in Illinois were notified via a memorandum of the need to provide data from the 2005-2006 school year using the web-based program for students who turned 16 or older during that school year. Initially, due to information contained within the checklist obtained from NSTTAC and vetted by Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), it was stated that in order for a student's IEP to meet the requirements of Indicator 13 the student needed to have a measurable post-secondary goal in each of the following areas: education, training, employment, and independent living (if applicable). Upon further clarification from the OSEP, it was determined that a student's IEP may meet the requirements of Indicator 13 if he/she has a measurable post secondary goal in employment, education OR training, and independent living (if applicable). Several districts within Illinois had already accessed the system and submitted their data prior to the clarification. Therefore, the data may not be accurate due to the change in instructions.

Baseline Data for FFY 2005 (2005-2006):

The baseline data indicates that 24.50% (22,042/89,970) of the students with disabilities ages 16 and above have an IEP that includes coordinated, measurable, annual IEP goals and transition services that will reasonably enable the student to meet the post-secondary goals.

Percentage of students with measurable transition goals

2005-2006



Upon review of the data for FFY 2005, it was determined that 25 districts reported 95% or greater of their students 16 and older met the requirements of Indicator 13. These are districts that may be doing very well with regard to transition or districts that may have misunderstood the reporting requirements.

- Percent of youth with IEPs graduating from high school with a regular diploma compared to percent of all youth in the State graduating with a regular diploma.
- The State's FFY 2005 reported data for this indicator show a 10.6% gap between the graduation rate for students with disabilities and the rate for all students (77.2% for students with disabilities as compared to 87.8% for all students). The State met its FFY 2005 target to reduce the gap between students with disabilities and all students to no more than 11%.
- Percent of youth with IEPs dropping out of high school compared to the percent of all youth in the State dropping out of high school.

The State's FFY 2005 reported data for this indicator show a 1.1% gap between the drop out rate for students with disabilities and the rate for all students (5.0% for students with disabilities as compared to 3.9% for all students). The State met its FFY 2005 target of reducing the gap between students with and without disabilities to no more than 1.9%.

Priorities and Actions for the Future

1. IICC will engage in ardent strategic planning to develop plans of action to develop public policy and increase recommendations on transition related issues to the Governor, General Assembly and key disability advocacy groups.

2. IICC will continue to partner with ISAC and ISBE to:

- communicate with an identified Governor's liaison on transition issues;
- create a statewide system that supports the development of knowledgeable responsive personnel who are accountable and understand their shared roles. This will be done in an attempt to align programs, services and supports necessary to assist youth in achieving post-school goals.

3. IICC is aware of the formation of the new Department of Juvenile Justice and will make the following recommendations to ISBE to amend the school code to allow a representative of the Juvenile Justice Department to sit as a member of IICC.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: IICC's Public Comment to the ISBE Ad Hoc Rules Committee

APPENDIX A

Public Comment To the ISBE Ad Hoc Rules Committee

Illinois State Board of Education
Division of Special Education Services
100 North 1st Street
Springfield, IL 62777-0001

Thank you for the opportunity to comment as the Illinois State Board of Education prepares to draft regulations implementing the IDEA reauthorization. We are the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council (20 ILCS 3970/2) and include representatives from Illinois' human service agencies including the State Board of Education, the Department of Human Services Divisions of Rehabilitation Services, Mental Health, and Development Disabilities, the Board of Higher Education, Community College Board, Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Department of Corrections, and UIC Division of Specialized Care for Children.

The new law contains many changes that we are certain will improve special education and lead to more successful outcomes for students with all types of disabilities. However, we wish to focus on a few areas that may have a powerful impact on positive student outcomes at the secondary and post-secondary level.

226.50 Eligibility, Graduation or Completion of Program

1. An eligible student who requires continued public school educational experience to facilitate his or her integration into society shall be eligible for such services through age 21, inclusive (i.e., through the day before the student's 22nd birthday) (34 CFR 300.101(a)).
2. "Students who have participated in a graduation ceremony but have not been awarded regular high school diplomas continue to be eligible to receive a free and appropriate education (FAPE) through age 21, inclusive." And, "if the student's individualized education program prescribes special education, transition planning, transition services, or related services beyond that point, issuance of that diploma shall be deferred so that the student will continue to be eligible for those services."
3. "A student with a disability who has fulfilled the minimum state graduation requirements set forth in Section 27-22 of the School Code [105 ILCS 5/27-22] shall be eligible for a regular high school diploma."
"The provision of FAPE is not required with respect to a student with a disability who has graduated with a regular high school diploma."

Comment and Recommendation

Current rules allow for a student to continue the school year if his/her birthday falls within that school year. In effect, if a student turned 21 on August 1, he/she would not be eligible for the coming school year. However, if a student turned 21 on September 1, he/she would have the advantage of an entire additional year of school. This rule resulted in inequities for students with disabilities based on the month of their 21st birthday. We agree with the Board's change to bring equity to all students by changing the criteria so that students can be eligible through 21 inclusive or until the day before their 22nd birthday.

We are pleased that the Board is attempting to clarify the implementation of Brittney's Law (105 ILCS 5/14-16). The passage of this legislation has been a positive step for students with disabilities who are contemplating participation in the graduation ceremony with their peers versus accepting a diploma and losing the continued public school educational experience to facilitate their integration into society. However, implementation of this legislation has been very confusing at the local level. With that in mind, we recommend that the Board consider a clearer definition of the students who would have the option to participate in graduation ceremony with their peers but continue to be eligible for the necessary transition-related planning, supports and services.

- We are concerned that the proposed definition will leave out students with more significant disabilities still fighting for the opportunity to participate in this important rite of passage with their peers.
- We recommend that the Board consider language that will clearly state that students with disabilities may choose to participate with their age-appropriate peers in the graduation ceremony and continue the public school educational experience to facilitate their integration into society.

226.230 Content of the IEP

4. Transition Services. "Beginning not later than the first IEP to be in effect when the child turns 14 ½..."

Comment and Recommendation

Research continues to reflect the need for early transition planning, e.g., National Longitudinal Studies demonstrate that age 15 as the most common age to drop out. Rather than Illinois delaying the age to provide needed services, the state should continue the existing practice. We believe that in this instance, it is satisfactory that Illinois rules and regulations exceed the Federal law. This recommendation is also in align with a number of other states' proposal to exceed the Federal Regulations in this area.

School districts should be encouraged to develop curricular and transition activities that emphasize career-planning especially job shadowing, work, or job training in the community. Additionally, we believe that school districts should be encouraged to adopt timelines for the completion of transition-related components/activities that suggest a wide variety of tasks that students, parents, educators and community providers should consider throughout the transition process.

Research has demonstrated that transition planning is a key to students' success in secondary education and in their postsecondary goals and that collaboration among the key stakeholders – students, parents, educators, community service providers – is critical.

5. "A statement of measurable annual goals that reflect consideration of the State Goals for Learning and the Illinois Learning Standards (see 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1), as well as benchmarks or short-term objectives developed in accordance with the child's present levels of educational performance."

Comment and Recommendation

We applaud the Board's determination to keep short-term objectives as an IEP content requirement for all students with disabilities. Under the current rules, student progress is inconsistently documented. We believe that following the federal law in this regard to remove the requirement of short-term objectives for most students with disabilities will only increase this inconsistency and widen the already existing gap between students with and without IEPs.

As the Board's Division of Special Education Services continues to implement a monitoring system aligned to outcomes for students, the continued inclusion of short-term objectives will be a critical measure of student progress.

6. The IICC proposes the development of Statewide Eligibility Criteria.

Comment and Recommendation

Statewide eligibility criteria is not included in the current rule and the IICC believes that the development and adoption such criteria would benefit Illinois students. Statewide eligibility criteria would establish consistency and continuity versus the varied adaptations of federal definitions as is the current practice. The IICC believes that developing and adopting an Illinois rule on eligibility would allow all Illinois students equal opportunity and access to services as well as provide consistency and continuity for students whose circumstances include changes in their community of residence.

7. Additional Discussion Points:
 - a. The IICC is in favor of adopting and implementing an electronic formatted statewide IEP.
 - b. Develop clear definitions in Illinois' rules and regulations for the following terms in the law:
 - i. Substantive transition services
 - ii. Point of commencement for adult services
 - c. Develop a clear message of the expectation of involvement in transition planning from agencies other than VR.
 - d. We request that the definition of educational transition services based on individual student strengths with preferences and interests considered, include the following:
 - i. Vocational/Interest Inventories
 - ii. Workplace/functional/ and vocational skills
 - iii. Independent/Community Living Skills

Thank you for allowing the Illinois Interagency Coordinating Council the opportunity to provide input before preparation of the proposed regulations to implement programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004).