



Think Possible! – Coordinating Employment Services and Supports Module 3 Transcript

Welcome to part three of the Think Possible! employment webinar series for service coordinators in the Wisconsin Department of Health Services children’s programs. This is the third in a series of three webinars designed to help service coordinators understand how to support youth and families along the path to achieving the goal of employment in the community.

In this module, you will continue to learn about DHS’s guiding principles for competitive integrated employment (or CIE). The learning objectives for this module include being able to:

- Summarize the role of community partners who can help youth achieve competitive integrated employment.
- Describe ways you can work with families and youth to achieve goals after high school.
- Identify resources on inclusion, transition, and training, and leadership opportunities for youth and families.

DHS’s ninth guiding principle for competitive integrated employment focuses on collaboration with partnering agencies. Interagency coordination at the state level with long-term care agencies, the Department of Workforce Development’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (or DVR), the Department of Public Instruction (or DPI), businesses, technical colleges, and school districts, as well as local and regional coordination, is necessary for youth and adults with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. In the following slides, you will learn how schools and DVR support youth with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment and how you can partner with them to support families and youth through their school years.

There are three very important ways DHS children’s program staff can partner with schools to support the goal of competitive integrated employment. The first is by encouraging an inclusive school experience, starting in the preschool years. The second is to support families to be engaged in academic and career planning, starting in the middle school years. The third is to be involved with families, youth, and schools in the postsecondary transition planning process.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (or IDEA) requires children with disabilities to be included in age-appropriate activities and curriculum to the maximum extent appropriate with their peers without disabilities. DPI strongly encourages school districts to provide inclusive educational opportunities for all students with disabilities.

Inclusion should start in preschool and extend throughout the school years. Families may be reluctant or fearful of their child being in inclusive settings. They may feel that a separate classroom environment is safer and better for their children; however, many studies have shown students with disabilities develop better language, academic, and social skills when they are included in general education classes and school activities. You can support families by listening to and understanding their concerns and helping them understand how being included with peers without disabilities will pay off in the long run. As a

professional who may be in their lives for several years, you play an important role in supporting families to plan and advocate for inclusive opportunities throughout the school years.

This slide has four key resources about inclusion. Click on each one and take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the content so that you can be prepared to share these resources with families.

All public school students in grades 6–12 have an academic and career plan, ACP for short. The ACP is an “ongoing process to actively engage students to develop an understanding of themselves, create a vision of their future, develop individual goals, and prepare a personal plan for achieving the vision and goals.” (from DPI’s ACP webpage)

The student’s ACP and individualized education program should be reflective of one another. You can encourage families to ask the school to bring key elements of the ACP to Individualized Education Program, or IEP, meetings and help them engage in a conversation with the school about including meaningful goals in the IEP that support school inclusion, aligning with the academic standards other students are working toward, and supporting the student along the path to competitive integrated employment.

According to DPI, “It is important that students with disabilities participate in the ACP process in the same ways that other students do so that they have the same opportunities to explore career interests; access the same school staff expertise outside of the IEP/PTP team; and are not treated differently from the other students.”

To watch a video about why the ACP is important and learn more, click on the link at the bottom of the screen.

The next phase of partnering with schools and families to achieve integrated employment begins at age 14 with the postsecondary transition plan or PTP for short. DPI requires school districts to create PTP goals for after high school that focus on education, training, and employment. Independent living goals are not required but can also be included in the PTP. Setting PTP goals must be supported by age-appropriate assessment and course of study, transition services, and meaningful annual goals. Information from the ACP is also used when creating the PTP.

Transition to life after high school can be an overwhelming experience for families. You can support families by helping them use the planning resources available and by letting them know you can be invited to attend IEP and transition planning meetings in order to work as a team to align goals and activities in and outside of school. The best resource to help youth and families understand and be more involved in the postsecondary transition planning process is the WiTransition App. Information about downloading this app can be found by clicking the link on the screen.

Important changes occurred in 2014 with passing of federal legislation called the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (or WIOA). While there are many parts to this legislation, families and youth with disabilities need to know that young adults up to age 25 must work with DVR prior to working for subminimum wage, schools and DVR must collaborate to provide pre-employment transition planning services, and schools can no longer pay for work training in subminimum wage jobs.

A helpful resource for youth and families to review before developing annual PTP goals is DPI’s Transition Services document. This document provides lists of activities aligned with the WIOA pre-

employment transition planning services that schools can engage in with youth. Youth and parents can use this list to select services needed in the areas of job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, postsecondary educational or higher education programs counseling, social and independent living skills training, and instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring. Take a minute to click on the link and become familiar with the document so you can be prepared to share it with families.

If a student requires extra time to meet transition goals, receiving school support after age 18 is an option. The right to Free Appropriate Public Education for a child with a disability who has not yet graduated continues until the 21st birthday unless the child turns 21 during a school term. If the child turns 21 during a school term, the right to FAPE continues through the end of that school term.

The 18–21-year-old programs can offer opportunities for continued career exploration, internships, postsecondary education, and development of employability and independent living skills. More and more school districts are offering community-based, off-high school campus 18–21 programs. For more information about 18–21 transition programs, click the link on your screen.

The next phase of supporting competitive integrated employment outcomes for youth involved in DHS's children's programs involves partnering with DVR. DVR is an important partner in helping youth get jobs before they leave school. Research shows that youth who have at least two paid work experiences while in high school are five times more likely to be successful with employment as adults.

Youth with disabilities should apply for DVR services at least two years prior to exiting school. Families can start the process by completing a referral on the Wisconsin DVR website.

DVR offers a number of services to help youth with employment, including:

- Assessments and job shadows to explore their interests
- Internships and work experiences to build skills
- Vocational training
- Job development and job coaching support
- Work incentives benefits counseling services to understand how work may affect public benefits.

Click the picture on the screen to learn more about DVR's youth services.

DHS, DPI, and DVR developed a resource called the Transition Action Guide (or TAG). This guide will help you understand your role and responsibilities in the transition planning process, as well as those of students, families, DVR counselors, and school staff. The TAG provides guidance on coordinating plans and resources, has a frequently asked questions section, and includes a number of helpful resources for transition planning. Take a minute to familiarize yourself with the TAG by clicking on the picture of the TAG on your screen.

Youth and parents benefit greatly from being connected to learning and leadership opportunities. This slide contains some opportunities you can share with youth and families. Each one includes a link for more information.

The Wisconsin Youth Leadership Forum (or YLF) is a weeklong leadership training and career awareness program for high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors with disabilities.

Youth in Partnership with Parents for Employment (or YiPPE) is a workshop series for youth and parents to meet together five times during the year to hear from speakers and take part in hands-on activities in parallel programs centered around transition. While some topics may overlap, parents will be able to enjoy their own sessions while their youth are learning similar information in a youth-friendly format.

Wisconsin Partners in Policymaking is a six-session advocacy and systems change training program designed to develop a group of future leaders across the state, who are able to work with legislators and communities on policies and initiatives that will support the full participation and inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of life.

The Wisconsin Transition Improvement Grant (or TIG) offers trainings for families called “My Child Can Work!” in various districts each year. Check out the calendar of events on the TIG website to find out about trainings in your area.

The Circles of Life Conference is held each spring for parents and family members of children with disabilities and the professionals who support them.

The Statewide Self-Determination Conference is held every fall and is focused on empowering people with disabilities in Wisconsin to have more control over their lives. More than 600 people each year participate in the conference to learn more about self-determination so they can live independently, be members of their communities, and use public funds efficiently.

The statewide Employment First Conference is held every spring and is focused on increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities by sharing information about policies and best practices in Wisconsin and throughout the country.

This slide contains some additional resources you can share with families. Each one includes a link for more information.

Service coordinators for DHS children’s programs play an important role in supporting youth to pursue competitive integrated employment outcomes. By providing planning support to youth and families, introducing and reviewing helpful resources, and coordinating plans with partnering agencies, you are helping youth gain independence and lead meaningful lives in their communities.

Thank you for viewing this three-part series. Remember to come back and access the information and resources any time you feel stuck or need more information to support youth and families with employment planning.