



# 2017 Wisconsin Act 178: Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes

Department of Workforce Development | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Department of Health Services  
Department of Public Instruction

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# Executive Summary

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## Purpose

People in Wisconsin want opportunities to work and be self-sufficient. Wisconsinites with disabilities are no exception. Employment is a primary means for working-age people to contribute to their communities and is one of the most satisfying and meaningful ways for people to achieve their goals. For people with disabilities interested in work, competitive integrated employment (CIE) is an important component of a fulfilling life and an opportunity to contribute to the community.

The Department of Workforce Development's (DWD) Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) have a long history of interagency collaboration in serving individuals with disabilities. Effective interagency collaboration is based on a shared vision, common goals, and mutual benefit for collaborative stakeholders and people with disabilities. In response to 2017 Wisconsin Act 178, DWD-DVR, DHS, and DPI have reaffirmed their commitment to work together to improve the lives of youth and adults with disabilities in Wisconsin by increasing CIE outcomes.

## Scope

2017 Wisconsin Act 178 requires DWD-DVR, DHS, and DPI to collaborate, with the input of stakeholders, in the development of a joint plan to increase CIE. This plan establishes performance improvement targets, describing specific coordination methods to ensure programs, policies, and procedures support CIE. The Departments will update the plan at least biennially.

As part of the plan, the Departments have developed three performance improvement targets and cross-agency objectives to implement collaboratively to improve CIE outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities in the state. Per Act requirements, to measure plan impact the three Departments will provide an annual CIE Report on: 1) plan implementation; 2) barriers to implementation; and 3) data on CIE for working age individuals with disabilities receiving public services outside their home.

More specifically, data will be provided for all working-age individuals with disabilities who have Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) with DPI or are receiving services through DHS long-term care (LTC) programs for adults, DHS Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS), DHS Mental Health, Individual Placement and Supports (IPS), DVR, or Youth Apprenticeship (YA).

## Mission and Shared Vision

**Mission:** To advance collaboration, cooperation, and communication between DHS, DWD-DVR, and DPI to increase CIE.

**Vision:** Empower individuals with disabilities to prepare for, participate in, and advance in CIE.

# DHS Guiding Principles

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DHS has established Guiding Principles that build on the value of full inclusion of people with disabilities served in long-term care programs. These evidence-based principles recognize that each person's path toward CIE involves a person-centered planning process that includes a variety of experiences to build toward successful jobs.<sup>1</sup>

These principles do not limit or impact the provision of allowable services in DHS's long-term care programs, including the provision of pre-vocational services compliant with Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS). Instead, this document focuses solely on advancing CIE as an outcome.

1. Everyone can work in a job if it is matched to his or her unique skills and interests, and they are provided with the right supports.
2. Competitive, integrated employment is the first and preferred employment outcome for all working-age youth and adults.
3. Working creates a strong path toward better physical and mental health.
4. Work is a pathway out of poverty, reduces reliance on public benefits, and is cost effective.
5. Students with disabilities who have the supports to participate in general education classes and activities and take some type of post-secondary courses are more likely to obtain competitive employment, require fewer supports, and earn higher wages.
6. When a child's parents, teachers, and other adults in their life expect that the child or teenager will work, they are up to five times more likely to work in the community as an adult.
7. Having two or more paid community work experiences during high school means teens are five times more likely to work in the community after high school.
8. To make informed choices about employment, people with disabilities need opportunities to receive comprehensive information about services available, work incentive benefits counseling, reasonable accommodations, supports, and opportunities to try a variety of community jobs.
9. Interagency coordination at the state level with long-term care agencies, DVR, 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.
10. Society as a whole and businesses in all sectors of the economy can benefit from a workforce that includes, and actively engages, people with disabilities.

# DWD-DVR Guiding Principles

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1. Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the rights of individuals to live independently, enjoy self-determination, make informed choices and decisions, contribute to society, pursue meaningful careers, and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of American society.<sup>2</sup>
2. Work is a fundamental aspect of adult life for individuals with and without disabilities. It contributes to independence and economic self-sufficiency, provides a sense of purpose and self-esteem, and shapes who we are and how we fit into our community.<sup>2</sup>
3. Individuals with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, can achieve employment that is high-quality, competitive, and integrated when provided the necessary services and supports. Competitive integrated employment includes self-employment and supported employment services, which could include customized employment services. Individual placement and support services, when provided in partnership with mental health services, also provide access to competitive integrated employment. Youth and adults with disabilities must have access to the services they need, including training and other supports, to have meaningful opportunities to achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes.<sup>2</sup>
4. Implementation of programs, projects, and activities must be based on:
  - Person-centered planning;
  - Respect for individual dignity, personal responsibility, self-determination, pursuit of meaningful careers, and informed choice;
  - Respect for the privacy, confidentiality, and rights of individuals, including the right to effective and meaningful access to services, information, and data; and
  - Reliance on and pursuit of evidence-based, promising, and emerging best practices.
5. Service providers or workers hired by a participant through adult long-term care programs must be approved and their staff must be qualified to facilitate the achievement of competitive integrated employment outcomes, including supported employment services.
6. State agencies must value and support individual and systemic advocacy and community involvement, including supporting the involvement of an individual's representative, if an individual with a disability requests, desires, or needs such support.

# DPI Guiding Principles

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1. Provide a free and appropriate public education to every child protected under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).<sup>3</sup>
2. Ensure every child graduates ready for college or a career.<sup>3</sup>
3. Promote engaged learning that motivates all children to reach their fullest potential.<sup>3</sup>
4. Sustain a culture of high expectations that promotes excellence and is achieved through intentional relationships with educational and interagency partners.<sup>4</sup>
5. Include students and families in the process of making educational decisions, ensuring students play a vital role in determining their future.<sup>4</sup>
6. Ensure educational environments are accessible, inclusive, and equitable for all students.<sup>4</sup>
7. Support Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in transition planning through collaboration with DWD-DVR and DHS. The Post-Secondary Transition Plan and Summary of Performance will be used as tools in this coordinated approach to effective transition planning.<sup>5</sup>
8. Implement consistent policies and procedures around transition planning and services for students with disabilities.<sup>5</sup>
9. Support evidence-based practices for students with disabilities that promote outcomes directly linked to competitive integrated employment for working-age individuals with disabilities.<sup>4</sup>
10. Coordinate a network of professionals to assist LEAs in implementing effective transition planning, programming, and services.<sup>5</sup>
11. Share statewide and regional post-school outcomes for students with Individualized Education Program (IEPs).<sup>6</sup>
12. Share data regarding the provision of pre-employment transition services for students with IEPs.<sup>6</sup>

# Performance Improvement

## Targets and Cross-Agency Objectives

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- 1. Increase awareness that work is possible for people with disabilities by promoting CIE opportunities using targeted outreach and education.**
  - a) Partner with Wisconsin businesses to include employer perspective and input in increasing CIE in Wisconsin, ensuring individuals with disabilities are recognized as potential employees to fulfill workforce needs and improve business's bottom line.
  - b) Complete a DVR-produced video promoting CIE for people with disabilities in Wisconsin by summer of 2019. This video will be housed on the CIE website. Distribute the completed video to a statewide audience crossing stakeholders in all three Departments via conference presentations, training events, and Department-specific email lists through spring of 2020.
  - c) Work collaboratively with the three Departments to increase CIE participation among Wisconsin Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries in the Partnership Plus Program. Enrollment will be tracked beginning in July 2019 and baseline data will be established through June 2020.
  - d) Track and document ongoing outreach to transition-aged students and their guardians, including youth receiving SSI, for dissemination in the annual CIE report.
  - e) Develop a joint messaging campaign by December 2019 for children and their families to promote and raise expectations for CIE.
  - f) Develop collaborative materials that explain the value of CIE and clarify misconceptions about working and loss of benefits. Make these materials available for distribution by June 2020 for educators, interdisciplinary team (IDT) staff, Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS) consultants, County Wavier Agencies (CWAs), and DVR counselors.
  - g) Collaborate to implement the Pay for Performance Initiative for members and participants enrolled in adult long-term care programs to increase rates of CIE.
  - h) Add mechanisms for youth, adult, and family voice and input into CIE planning to ensure outreach materials are consumer friendly and service systems are consumer driven.

- i) Create efficiencies within the DVR referral system to streamline referrals of potential consumers to DVR in collaboration with DHS. Train staff from both DHS and DVR on the updated system for DVR referrals.

## **2. Align service delivery systems and strengthen coordination to increase CIE opportunities for people with disabilities.**

- a) Develop, refine, and use a system to collect and analyze common individual-related data:
  - By January 2019, identify staff from each Department to participate in a CIE Workgroup to develop a data sharing agreement between the Departments. Begin Workgroup meetings in February 2019 and complete the plan by December 31, 2019.
  - Through the CIE Workgroup, identify data elements that will be included in the data sharing agreement between the three Departments to track trends in common individuals related to CIE.
- b) Set statewide CIE benchmarks and evaluate progress:
  - During year one of the plan (July 2019 – June 2020), gather baseline data from each Department to set data benchmarks with stakeholder input.
  - During year two of the plan (July 2020 – June 2021), identify common individuals, set benchmarks, and report on common individual-related data.
- c) Identify and use promising evidence-based employment practices for systems change and collaboration in partner service delivery systems.<sup>7,8,9</sup>
- d) Create an organizational framework that strengthens and sustains the partnership between the three Departments to ensure long-term impact:
  - Keep memorandums of understanding (MOUs) and interagency agreements updated and implement activities included within those agreements. Ensure the documents are signed by all three Departments to promote accountability in the systems change efforts required to increase CIE for working-age people with disabilities.
  - Develop clear roles and responsibilities for state and local agencies in planning and coordinating services to help individuals and families better understand state systems. Document roles and responsibilities in all MOUs and interagency agreements.
  - Continue to assign committed staff from each Department to the CIE Workgroup and CIE Leadership meetings to ensure collaborative work on CIE remains a priority for the three Departments.
- e) Formalize cross-agency relationships and communication methods between state and local entities to allow consistent implementation of policy and practice:

- Invite DWD-DVR and DPI to DHS's External Employment Managed Care Organization (MCO) and IRIS Consultant Agency (ICA) meetings held quarterly.
- Encourage staff from each Department to participate in their local County Communities on Transition (CCoT) to create relationships and improve transition services to students in their areas.
- Disseminate best practices at the local level through DVR's Statewide Transition Action and Resource Team (START) to promote collaboration between DVR, local school districts, MCOs, and ICAs.
- Share information at the local level and develop best practices in collaborating with DVR counselors, MCO/IDT staff, CWAs, service coordinators, IRIS program consultants, and educators. Include this as a requirement in interagency agreements and MOUs to ensure accountability from each Department.
- Ensure that each Department shares information about initiatives which impact the common customer such as improving access to transportation and assistive technology.

### **3. Prepare students for CIE through their educational experience, connecting individuals to vital services both during and after high school.**

- a) Revise the statewide Youth and Adult Transition Action Guides (TAGs) to include collaboration between the three Departments and practical guidance on preparing students and adults for CIE.
- b) Develop and carry out a strong plan for professional, cross-agency development that includes both in-person training and technical assistance, including online resources.
  - Develop joint trainings to address issues including provider capacity and best practices in serving common individuals. Examples of joint trainings include Motivational Interviewing, Person-Centered Planning, Trauma Informed Care, Supported/Customized Employment, Rural Transportation Solutions, etc.
  - Create a Service Provider Capacity Workgroup led by DWD-DVR that includes service providers and representatives from each Department to consider options for business models, training, technical assistance, and incentives for service providers. Ensure CIE Leadership reviews and approves the training plan developed by this workgroup by October 2019.
- c) Showcase schools and programs in the state that are effective in connecting students to early work experiences through local school districts and DVR staff. Accomplish this by sharing stories each quarter via blogs or vlogs, press and media releases, CIE and partner agency websites, conference presentations, etc.

- d) Develop and share resources that inform stakeholders such as Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC), long-term support professionals, DVR counselors, and educators about community services and supports available to the students they serve during and after high school.
- Post the plan and report and share resources on each Department's implementation of 2017 Wisconsin Act 178 on the joint CIE website, available at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/cie/>.
  - Assign committed staff from each Department to participate in the Wisconsin Community on Transition (WiCoT). The WiCoT is an existing statewide forum to engage stakeholders and share resources between the Departments and key partners, including technical colleges, the Wisconsin Statewide Parent-Educator Initiative (WSPEI), the Wisconsin Family Assistance Center for Education, Training and Support (FACETS), and the Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities (BPDD).
  - Build a collaborative relationship between DVR START, DHS Children's Waiver staff, and DPI TIG staff to continue to create and share resources for students and families to promote advocacy for CIE experiences while in school and as transition-age youth within schools, DVR, and DHS (e.g., Work Incentive Benefits Counseling, opportunities for work experiences, etc.). Share these resources at the local level when staff identify students and families who could benefit from them.

# Competitive Integrated Employment Initiatives Table

The following table contains goals and activities for each Department to support opportunities and increased participation in CIE for common individuals.

<b>2017 Wisconsin Act 178 Competitive Integrated Employment Initiatives</b>		
<b><i>Domain 1: Targeted Outreach &amp; Marketing</i></b>		
<b>Goals:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase awareness that competitive integrated work is possible for people with disabilities by promoting CIE opportunities.</li> <li>• Provide information about accessing and using services that assist individuals in reaching CIE.</li> <li>• Provide information on how to engage with services/supports to assist individuals with disabilities to reach their CIE goals.</li> </ul>		
<b><i>DWD-DVR Activities</i></b>	<b><i>DHS Activities</i></b>	<b><i>DPI Activities</i></b>
Increase participation among Wisconsin Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiaries in the Partnership Plus program.	Implement a pay for performance initiative for members and participants enrolled in adult long-term care programs to increase rates of CIE.	Collect feedback and data on how funds are supporting CIE within schools.
Complete and distribute a DVR video to promote CIE for individuals with disabilities in Wisconsin.	Promote CIE through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Messaging campaign for children and their families</li> <li>○ Materials that explain the value of CIE and clarify misconceptions about working and losing benefits that can be distributed by educators.</li> </ul>	Provide technical assistance to Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) receiving Transition Improvement Grant funds on how to budget funding to address concerns about funds not being targeted toward transition services, including CIE supports.
Document outreach to transition-aged students and their parents/guardians, including those receiving SSI.		

## Domain 2: Data-Driven Quality Assurance

### Goals:

- Inform practices and provide evidence of CIE outcomes for individuals with disabilities by collecting and analyzing common data elements between the Departments.
- Validate improved CIE outcomes by tracking common data elements for each Department related to common individuals.

<b>DWD-DVR Activities</b>	<b>DHS Activities</b>	<b>DPI Activities</b>
Increase participation in the Partnership Plus program among Wisconsin SSI and SSDI beneficiaries.	Develop and implement a new wage collection system for adult long-term care programs to collect CIE data for adult long-term care participants.	Provide technical assistance to LEAs receiving Transition Improvement Grant funds on how to budget funding to address concerns about funds not being targeted toward transition services, including CIE supports.
	Provide regular data updates to County Waiver Agencies to help gauge progress toward raising interest in employment by age 14 and participation in CIE, beginning at age 16.	Provide transition services aligned with research, best practice, and in-district student-level data to increase post-school outcomes for students with disabilities.
		Revise grant applications and review processes to more effectively and efficiently support CIE.

## Domain 3: Policy, Practice, and Quality Changes

**Goal:** Improve services by developing and implementing best practices and quality improvements to increase and improve CIE outcomes.

<b>DWD-DVR Activities</b>	<b>DHS Activities</b>	<b>DPI Activities</b>
Increase participation in the Partnership Plus program among Wisconsin SSI and SSDI beneficiaries.	Implement a pay for performance initiative for members and participants enrolled in adult long-term care programs to increase rates of CIE.	Revise grant applications and review processes to more effectively and efficiently support CIE.
	Explore updating service definitions related to employment for the adult long-term care waivers.	
	Require foundational training in CIE and Think Possible! for all new service coordinators in children's programs.	

### Cross Agency Objectives

1. Develop data sharing agreements between DWD-DVR, DHS, and DPI.
2. Match data from the three Departments tracking trends in common individuals in CIE.

# Appendix A

## Citations and References

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1. DHS Guiding Principles for Competitive Integrated Employment for People with Disabilities in Long-term Care, <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p01786.pdf>.
2. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 701.
3. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2019. "Communication Resources." Accessed January 18, 2019, <https://dpi.wi.gov/statesupt/every-child-graduate/communication-resources>.
4. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. 2019. "The Special Education Team." Accessed January 18, 2019, <https://dpi.wi.gov/sped>.
5. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. 2018. *Interagency Agreement*.
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9. Tucker, K., Feng, H., Gruman, C., & Crossen, L. 2017. Improving competitive integrated employment for youth and young adults with disabilities: Findings from an evaluation of eight Partnerships in Employment Systems Change Projects. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 47, 277-294.

# Appendix B

## Definitions

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### **Adult Long-Term Care Waivers**

Medicaid programs for adults with disabilities and frail elders that provide long-term care services. Long-Term Care Waivers in Wisconsin include Family Care and Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS).

### **Best Practices**

A procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results, and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption.

### **Common Individuals**

In this document, people who are simultaneously served by more than one Department are referred to as common individuals.

### **Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)**

Employment consisting of work performed on a full-time or part-time basis; compensated not less than the applicable state or local minimum wage (or the customary wage), or if self-employment yields income, comparable to person without disabilities doing similar tasks; the worker should be eligible for the level of benefits provided to other employees; the work should be at a location typically found in the community; where the employee with a disability interacts with other people who do not have disabilities, and are not in supervisory roles, and; the job presents opportunities for advancement. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amended the Rehabilitation Act Title IV in 2014 to include this definition.

### **County Community on Transition (CCoT)**

A regional community that meets regularly to identify issues, barriers, supports, and solutions in assisting students with disabilities in successful transition based on student post-secondary goals related to training or education, employment, and independent living. The keys to CCoT success are: sharing the workload; establishing effective communication; and creating new relationships to better work together.

## **County Waiver Agency (CWA)**

An agency responsible for operating the Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS) Waiver Program. Each county has at least one CWA.

## **Family Care**

A Medicaid long-term care program for frail elders and adults with disabilities. The program provides a wide range of health and long-term care services.

## **Include, Respect, I Self-Direct (IRIS)**

A Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waiver for adults choosing to self-direct their long-term support needs.

## **IRIS Consulting Agency (ICA)**

An agency that assists participants and legal representatives in identifying immediate and long-term care needs, developing options to meet those needs, and accessing identified supports and services.

## **Long-Term Care**

Any service or support that an individual may need due to a disability, aging, or a chronic illness that limits the person's ability to complete activities that are part of daily life. These activities include bathing, getting dressed, making meals, going to work, and paying bills.

## **Managed Care Organization (MCO)**

An organization that operates the Family Care program and provides or coordinates services in the Family Care benefit package. MCOs receive a monthly payment per person to manage care for their members, who may be living in their own homes, in group living situations, or in nursing facilities.

## **Pay for Performance**

Also known as "value-based purchasing", pay for performance (P4P) is a payment model in the healthcare industry that offers financial incentives to physicians, hospitals, medical groups, and other healthcare providers for meeting certain performance measures.

## **Person-Centered Planning**

An ongoing problem-solving process used to help people with disabilities plan for their futures. In person-centered planning, the treatment team focuses on identifying what the individual wants to do and assists the individual in developing skills and managing limitations or barriers.

## **Statewide Transition Action and Resource Team (START)**

A DVR team whose members take the lead on issues related to transition-age youth in their respective areas. START members are a resource for other staff within their Workforce Development Area (WDA) related to services to transition-age youth.

## **Transition-Age Youth**

Individuals between the ages of 14 and 21.

## **Wisconsin Community on Transition (WICoT)**

A group of key stakeholders that meets to share best practices and impact policies/outcomes for youth with disabilities transitioning to adult life.

## **Work Incentive Benefits Counseling (WIBC)**

A process involving an individualized benefits analysis designed to help a member or participant understand the impact of income from employment on their disability benefits, including Medicaid acute/primary and long-term care benefits.

### **Federal Funding Disclosure (Stevens Amendment)**

The Stevens Amendment is an appropriations provision that requires U.S. Department of Education grant recipients to acknowledge federal funding when publicly communicating any projects or programs. This requirement to reveal the costs financed with federal funds promotes transparency and accountability and ensures any federally funded research and work are properly credited.

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2025 (FFY 2025), the total amount of grant funds awarded were \$87,214,145, including \$15,522,975 reserved for Pre-Employment Transition Services. The remaining 21.3% (\$23,604,337) of the costs were funded by Wisconsin state appropriations.

### **Additional U.S. Department of Education program grants include:**

**Career Pathways:** The Career Pathways Program is supported by the U.S. Department of Education. A total of 100% (\$20,415,000) of the Career Pathways Program is financed with federal funds.

**Supported Employment – Adults with Disabilities:** Supported Employment Services for Adults with Disabilities are funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A total of 100% (\$226,734.50) of Supported Employment Services for Adults with Disabilities are financed with federal funds.

**Supported Employment – Youth with Disabilities:** Supported Employment Services for Youth with Disabilities are funded by the U.S. Department of Education. A total of 90% (\$226,734.50) of Supported Employment Services for Youth with Disabilities are financed with federal funds, and 10% is funded by other sources.