

WISCONSIN ACT 178



Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes



STATE FISCAL YEAR
2026-27 BIENNIAL PLAN



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

STATE OF WISCONSIN



Department of Workforce Development

Vocational Rehabilitation



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

CIE Joint Guiding Principles 4

Performance Improvement 5

Competitive Integrated Employment Initiatives Table 7

Appendix A: Citations and References.....9

Appendix B: Definitions.....12

Stevens Amendment.....15

Executive Summary

Purpose

People in Wisconsin want opportunities to work and be self-sufficient. Wisconsinites with disabilities are no exception. Competitive integrated employment (CIE) offers a pathway to meaningful work for people with disabilities, enabling them to contribute to their communities and reach personal goals.

CIE is full- or part-time work for individuals with disabilities that pays the customary wage for similar work performed by individuals without disabilities, at least the applicable state or local minimum wage. For those who are self-employed, CIE earnings must be comparable to those of their peers without disabilities doing similar tasks. CIE also involves working in a typical community setting, where employees with disabilities interact with other people in non-supervisory roles who do not have disabilities, receive the same level of benefits provided to other employees, and have opportunities for career advancement. This definition was codified in 2014 when the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) amended Title IV of the Rehabilitation Act.

In Wisconsin, the Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DWD-DVR), the Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) have a longstanding partnership focused on supporting individuals with disabilities. This collaboration is guided by a shared vision, common goals, and mutual commitment to improving outcomes for Wisconsin residents with disabilities.

In response to 2017 Wisconsin Act 178, DWD-DVR, DHS, and DPI reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening interagency coordination to improve CIE outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities across the state.

Scope

The 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 178 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 Individual Education Programs (IEPs) with local educational agencies (LEAs) monitored by DPI or are receiving services through DHS long-term care (LTC) programs for adults, DHS Children's Long-Term Support (CLTS), DHS Individual Placement and Support (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.

CIE Joint Guiding Principles

DHS-DMS and DCTS, DWD-DVR, and DPI have jointly established guiding principles to support CIE. These principles reflect the agencies' shared commitment to person-centered planning, informed choice, respect for privacy and dignity, self-determination, and the full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

Grounded in evidence-based research and best practices, these principles, detailed below, serve as the foundation for ongoing interagency collaboration. They guide how the departments work together to deliver coordinated services and supports that help individuals with disabilities achieve successful CIE outcomes.

1. CIE is the first and preferred employment outcome for all youth and adults.
2. 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 at the right time.
3. Employment is a social determinant of health for all individuals, including those with disabilities.
4. CIE increases personal income, promotes financial independence, reduces reliance on public benefits, and is cost effective.
5. CIE enhances quality of life, fosters a sense of belonging, and improves self-confidence and social engagement for individuals with disabilities.
6. Participation in general education, post-secondary education, and training increases the likelihood that students with disabilities will obtain CIE, require fewer supports, and earn higher wages.
7. The expectation held by parents, educators, and others that a child with disabilities can and will work as an adult is a strong predictor of future success in achieving CIE.
8. Paid work experiences during high school significantly increase the likelihood of achieving CIE after graduation.
9. Informed choice about CIE requires access to comprehensive information, including:
 - A range of individualized support models related to CIE services;
 - Work incentive benefits counseling;
 - Information about reasonable accommodations;
 - Opportunities to explore and try a variety of CIE jobs; and
 - How to maintain good health into and throughout adulthood.

10. Coordinated interagency services and strong partnerships at both the state and local levels are essential to support CIE success for youth and adults with disabilities.
11. Businesses in all sectors of the economy and society as a whole benefit from a workforce that includes, and actively engages, individuals with disabilities.
12. Agency-level data collection and collaborative data sharing support meaningful analysis, inform decision-making, and help measure the impact and effectiveness of CIE-related practices.

Performance Improvement

Targets and Cross-Agency Objectives

1. Increase awareness that work is possible for people with disabilities by promoting CIE opportunities using targeted outreach and education.

- A. Set and measure agency performance targets to increase CIE including youth engagement.
- B. Continue to analyze baseline employment data of people with disabilities to address identified disparities in outcomes and or service delivery.
 - i. Share data with key organizations and partners to build awareness that services are available to support people working in CIE.
 - ii. Continue to identify additional barriers in service delivery for underrepresented groups and generate potential solutions to address those barriers.
- C. Educate employers, families, advocacy and self-advocacy organizations, schools, managed care organizations, IRIS consulting agencies, and ADRC staff that CIE is possible with collaboration and relationship building.
 - i. Use infographics and relevant CIE data to educate and gather input on barriers and solutions impacting employment for people with disabilities.
 - ii. Use the updated Adult Technical Assistance Guide (Adult TAG) as the primary regional training material for education and outreach.
- D. Annually review and update the [CIE website](#).
- E. Research methods to measure the benefits of employment for people with disabilities, including return on investment for state and local systems and improvements in quality of life.

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

- A. Develop and implement a strategic plan to broaden access to IPS including implementing new IPS sites in each year of the joint plan.
- B. Explore the creation of a transportation resource page on the CIE website.

- C. Research options for service provider training and credentials.
- D. Analyze costs for service providers to deliver supported employment services to individuals served by DWD-DVR and DHS to inform future fee schedule considerations.
- E. Identify and conduct outreach to other provider industries (e.g., direct care, mental health, youth justice, unhoused, etc.) to gauge interest in providing employment services to CIE target groups.
- F. Encourage current employment service providers to expand their service areas through targeted outreach.
- G. Research expansion of the Dane County Supported Employment Provider Coalition model to increase collaboration between partners who support individuals in CIE.
- H. Follow the 2026-2027 CIE-MIS roadmap to guide data development efforts and add new data elements. The current CIE-MIS contains a strong foundation of data, enabling meaningful analysis to identify effective strategies for improving employment outcomes. Expanding the dataset will help create a more comprehensive understanding of individuals pursuing or engaged in CIE.
 - i. Continue exploring and developing key performance indicators and build the data system to support reporting by those indicators.
 - ii. This may include developing a public facing dashboard and infographics for CIE data.
- I. Revise the Youth Transition Action Guide (YTAG) to include additional roles (e.g., school nurses, mental health professionals, etc.) in the transition from school to employment for youth with disabilities.

3. Prepare students for careers by participating in K-12 career pathways that include a sequence of career and technical education (CTE) courses and work-based learning experiences while connecting them to support services both during and after high school.

- A. Promote work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities including Youth Apprenticeship, co-ops, temporary work experiences, Project SEARCH, career pathways, and integrated school-based enterprises.
- B. Train CTE educators about supporting students with disabilities to reach their employment goals.
 - i. Provide technical assistance and education to CTE teachers about including students with disabilities in CTE coursework and experiences.²

¹The Project SEARCH program is supported by the U.S. Department of Education. A total of 93% of the Project SEARCH program is financed with federal funds, and 7% is funded by other sources.

²DPI staff members providing technical assistance to CTE teachers and school counselors is supported by the U.S. Department of Education IDEA federal funds. A total of 100% of DPI staff members from the Special Education Team are financed with federal funds.

- ii. Promote examples of inclusion of students with disabilities in CTE coursework to CTE educators.
- C. Engage school counselors on strategies that encourage the inclusion of students with disabilities in academic and career planning through training and technical assistance.
- D. Showcase examples of collaboration between transition partners representing all three agencies.
- E. Research and implement services and supports for justice-involved youth with disabilities to increase CIE outcomes through the Transforming to Thrive Grant project.

Agency-Specific Competitive Integrated Employment Initiatives Tables

The following tables contain activities for each department to support interagency objectives and opportunities for increased participation in CIE for common individuals.

State Fiscal Years 2026-27 Agency-Specific Competitive Integrated Employment Initiatives
<i>DWD-DVR Activities</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve quality employment outcomes for individuals served by DVR by increasing their median wages earned per hour. • Focus on equitable service delivery and service expenditures for underrepresented groups served by DVR. • Increase the number of individuals served by DVR achieving measurable skills gains (MSGs) through participation in training programs that lead to quality employment outcomes. Examples of training programs include Project SEARCH and on-the-job, vocational, and post-secondary training programs.
<i>DHS Activities</i>
<p>Division of Medicaid Services (DMS) Adult Long Term Support Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish DMS SFY 2020-2025 CIE data. • Develop and publish new DMS CIE trainings. • Promote and increase the number of people participating in online and in-person DMS CIE trainings. • Update IRIS service definitions for the 2026 waiver renewal. • Collect and analyze service data on the six components of individual supported employment and the CIE Exploration service in the Family Care and IRIS waivers.

DMS Children's Long Term Support Program

- Promote the Career Planning and Discovery option for individuals in CLTS to increase employment readiness in all Wisconsin counties.
- Target employment promotion to geographic areas and disability groups that are underrepresented given current CIE data.
- Promote and train county support and service coordinators on employment readiness using existing options (Career Planning and Discovery) and methods to engage with DVR and DPI to increase the percentage of youth who are accessing employment services.

DCTS Behavioral Health

- Continue ongoing training with ForwardHealth field representatives, counties, providers, and other partners on billing best practices for IPS.
- Begin analyzing IPS data received from new IPS data survey for quarterly outcomes.
- Increase average fidelity scores across IPS sites.

DPI Activities

- Commit to investing in the Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) to provide training and resources to the field that promote increased CIE outcomes for students with disabilities.³
- Coordinate the Wisconsin Community on Transition (WiCoT) to support local engagement of transition stakeholders in County Communities on Transition (CCoT).
- Collaborate with career and technical education partners to increase engagement of students with IEPs in career pathways, Youth Apprenticeship, and academic and career planning.⁴

³The Transition Improvement Grant (TIG) is supported by the U.S. Department of Education IDEA discretionary federal funds. A total of 100% of the TIG is financed with federal funds.

⁴ DPI staff members' collaboration with Career and Technical Education partners is supported by the U.S. Department of Education IDEA federal funds. A total of 100% of DPI staff members from the Special Education Team are financed with federal funds.

Appendix A

Citations and References for Guiding Principles

Principle 1

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Principle 2

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Principle 6

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Principle 9

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Principle 10

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Appendix B

Definitions

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.

Career and Technical Education (CTE)

Programs that prepare individuals for a wide range of careers that reflect the contemporary workplace. A high-quality Career and Technical Education program consists of three main components to achieve college and career readiness: academic and technical skills, leadership through CTSOs, and work-based learning

Career Based Learning Experiences

Business-connected experiences and opportunities that allow K-12 students to participate in career awareness, career exploration, or career development.

Career Pathways

A series of connected career and technical courses and training opportunities that flow seamlessly into a post-high school education setting or directly into entry level work for a specific career area.

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.

CIE Disparities

A noticeable and usually a significant difference or dissimilarity in CIE service participation or outcomes.

CIE Management Information System (MIS)

A computerized information processing system designed to support the activities necessary to meet the requirements for security, privacy compliance, and cross agency data analysis as required by Act 178.

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.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

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.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS)

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is a model of supported employment for people with serious mental health and substance use conditions. IPS supported employment helps people living with mental health and substance use conditions work at regular jobs of their choosing. Although variations of supported employment exist, IPS refers to the evidence-based practice of supported employment. Mainstream education and technical training are included as ways to advance career paths. IPS is based on eight (8) principles.

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.

Limited Data Set (LDS)

LDS data is stripped of identifiers from the person while still allowing person-level analysis and trend reporting.

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 (P4P)

Also known as "value-based purchasing," 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.

Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

Any sensitive data used to identify, contact, or locate a specific individual. This includes common identifiers such as full name, date of birth, street or email address, and demographic data, otherwise known as an identity for a person.

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 and outcomes for youth with disabilities transitioning to adult life.

Wisconsin Non-Driver Advisory Committee (WiNDAC)

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) formed WiNDAC in spring of 2020 as an advisory forum to discuss transportation mobility, safety, and access for Wisconsin's non-driving populations. Non-driving populations can include aging adults, students, low-income individuals, those with physical, mental, or intellectual/developmental disabilities, and those who prefer not to drive.

Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) Project

The U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) started the WDQI grant program in 2010, with the purpose of supporting the development or expansion of state workforce longitudinal administrative databases. DWD was awarded a WDQI grant in 2019. According to DOL, the knowledge gained through data analytics can help states improve the effectiveness of their programs, identify shifts in the labor market, and design services to better meet their customers' needs.

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.

STATE OF WISCONSIN



Department of Workforce Development

201 E. Washington Ave.

Madison, WI 53703

608-266-3131 | dwd.wisconsin.gov



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
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